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Miss
DULCIE
from
DIXIE

Lulah
Ragsdale



Miss
DULCIE
from
DIXIE

5-11-1941
C. L. LEROY
100 N. 10TH ST.
MINNAPOLIS, MINN.



"Miss Fairfield . . . let me present . . . *Miss Dulcie from Dixie*

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Miss DULCIE *from*
DIXIE

BY
LULAH RAGSDALE



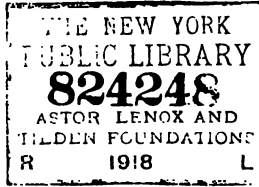
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TO "DOT"
THE PATIENT LISTENER
AND MOST LONG-SUFFERING SISTER ALIVE

Miss DULCIE from DIXIE

Arden

October Thirtieth

Another birthday!

I feel terribly solemn about it, because it's the biggest birthday I've had yet, and because it's brought me awfully near to being a woman. It's not an easy thing to be a woman; read Thos. Otway:

O woman—Nature made thee
To temper man: we had been brutes without you.

Read Lowell:

Earth's noblest thing—a woman perfected.

Read the Bible:

Her price is far above rubies.

See how we are thought of by some of the best thinkers of the ages. Then read Kipling:

A rag, a bone, and a hank of hair.

Also:

The female of the species is more deadly than the male.

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Notice how we are regarded by one of the wisest of modern thinkers. . . . Oh, I wish I wore pants, and didn't have any sex reputation to live up, or down, to!

But today I'm awfully near to becoming one of those human dreadnaughts that, frail as eggshells, yet go forth upon the high seas of life, expected to sail into port at last, unharmed! And Daddy's the only person I've ever had to teach me how to steer the shebang—except Mammy, and all she ever answers when I ask her how to do when I'm really out in the world is:

“Smile yo' plum prettiest, honey, and git all de mens at yo' foots: dat's de onliest way f'r a oomans to git along in dis life.”

At my “foots”—but no nearer. Who taught me that? I don't know—but I know it. Maybe Mumsey's spirit hovers over her little girl. All right, Mumsey, I'll remember; no nearer, till the right one comes, then—close up to my heart, Mumsey: the way you held Dad.

Nineteen today, at three A. M. Dad says I arrived at that untoward hour, and have continued being untoward ever since.

Nineteen! That's really past the little girl tomboy stage—Dad's only tomboy! It couldn't

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have been longer than day before yesterday that I climbed one of the gallery columns, perched like a gargoyle on the Corinthian capital, then slid down to the upstairs porch. It was surely yesterday I raced old Bill round the plantation and hurdled the rail fence down by the creek; and yet—Bill died last week from old age; the Maréchal Neil rose vine has almost covered that pillar; Daddy's lot's grayer—and he stoops a little: the roof leaks worse, and I know now about the mortgage; the boll-weevils played the deuce with the cotton crop—and I'm grown up! I can't fool myself any longer—I *know I am!* Nineteen seems much older than eighteen!

I had a l-o-v-e-l-y day, until—and to think Dad's known it all these years, and that it had to happen on this birthday! But I'll begin at the beginning and come to "it" in its proper order.

I got up early and slipped down to the garden to scrape up Dad a posy. I found a late Cape Jasmine—he loves them because they are so old-fashioned, and they *are* like a woman's sweet, white flesh. I put it on his desk, beside the latest chapter of his "Civil War, As It Was." When it's finished and sold we're going

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to repair the house, pay off the mortgage, buy us some new clothes, get a new buggy, and have as many oysters as we can eat, for once.

Dad gave me Mumsey's little watch for my birthday present, with his picture in the back of it. What a beautiful thing he was when he was a young man! He's simply *grand* now! You'd never think his ivory hair used to be almost red: his eyes are still like brown wine. It's funny Dad being as old as he is, and me his only child; but then he didn't marry till he was fifty—the war had left him so “impoverished.” But Mumsey adored him, even if she was only twenty-three.

At two o'clock we had the birthday dinner—the hen *was* tough, after all, but we talked a whole lot while we ate her, so's each wouldn't notice how hard the other had to chew: besides, her stuffing was *very* good, and there 're mighty few things in life good both inside *and* out. Ma'y-Ann had baked me a cake, with icing roses pinkened with poke berry juice, and there were nineteen little candles that Dad had bought with his own precious money! But they *were* gay, and we *did* have fun as I blew at them to learn what kind of luck I'm going to have during my nineteenth year. Daddy held me tight

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as wax when the fifth one sputtered and hissed, and wouldn't go out. I heard him kind of heave inside, as he does when it's anything unusual about me. I hugged him tighter than he hugged me, and said:

"Nothing bad can happen as long as we're together, honey." He answered back, sort of hoarse:

"But how long will we be together?"

After dinner, we hitched Old Sal, the white mule, to the buggy and went into town—oh, we had a spanking holiday! I'd cleaned and pressed his dear old greeny-black clothes yesterday; I trimmed the frays off his best collar, brushed his old slouch hat, and he looked like an exiled king or the picture of Robert E. Lee, when he was dressed. Then I slipped that dollar I got for making Yellow Lucy's twins a pair of pink calico christening dresses, into his pocket, and said, very innocent-like:

"Got a clean handker', Dad?"

You ought to've seen his face light up when he put in his hand and found that money.

"W-e-l-l! Well!"—He bit like the fine old fellow he is—"Here's some change I'd forgotten I had—have I a fresh one, honey?"

"Haven't I had one drying on the mirror all

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morning?" I handed him his real linen one. . . . He treated me to an ice-cream soda when we got into town, and then with the air of a lord bought cigars for Captain Blake and Major Witherspoon—ain't I glad Lucy had twins instead of a single!

After we'd eaten the last of the hen cold for supper we walked out into the yard. It was a heavenly night, with a silver-green moon pouring down such light that the shadows of the trees looked like purple rugs thrown over the grass. I ran down to the old box-hedge maze, drew Dad in, and then we got separated. For ten minutes we threaded round and round lost to each other, yet in touch of one another's hands; it was always a baffling and exciting experience to me! When we finally got out Dad stopped still in an open splotch of light, his eyes fixed on me as if he were mesmerized. I stood still, too, something seeming to hold my eyes on him. I knew then that I was really about to start forth as a human dreadnaught; I seemed to feel the whiz of the submarines under my—my—keel, and the shivery creep of hidden mines below the waters. I was not scared, but, oh, the strange *aloneness*. It must be that way when we start slipping out into death.

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"D-a-d!" I cried, faintly cold. He caught me by the hand as if he would go with me, but how can anybody go with us into death—or into life? Each is for every human being to explore alone. "Baby!" His voice trembled. Then we clung together, the same thought in each mind. I whispered against his cold cheek:

"Neither life nor death can part us, Dad."

He breathed against my forehead:

"Neither death *nor life* can part us for *long*, Baby. . . . Come, I must tell you: I've put it off all day."

And I'm going to put off what he told me till tomorrow. I just can't write it tonight. It's past midnight now: Dad's light's just gone out—I always watch it over my transom: maybe he can sleep if he thinks I can, so—out goes mine! I'm 'way—'way past nineteen now!

November First

Dad led me to the old summer house, covered with vines. We sat down on the steps and he took off his hat. If there's one time I adore Dad more than another it's when that great polar-bear head dawns on me afresh. He ran his long aristocratic fingers through his waving forelocks, and sat looking up at a little dangle of blossoms that had come out even in this fall weather for this very occasion, I do believe.

"Confederate jasmines!" mused Dad, aloud, and when Dad muses aloud it's as if the shell of him had softly cracked, and the rich whiteness of him lay exposed to your spiritual taste. "Con-fed-er-ate—that reminds me." I knew he'd been thinking of something all along, and this was his way of coming to it. "You've heard me speak of your uncle Stephan?"

"Often," I quirked up. I scented a story.

"Eleven years before the war"—if America should engage in fifty encounters of assorted kinds and sizes there'd still be only *one* war

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to Dad—"in fact during the gold fever of the late forties, Stephan left home——"

"This home?" I interrupted, looking about. I don't think Arden ever looked so beautiful—so all that the ancestral home of a big-minded, big-souled, fine-blooded family ought to look.

"This home—and went West—to California, to try his luck with other rumor-inflamed seekers after gold."

"And *did* find a fortune." I always love to hear the story of adventurous, odd Uncle Stephan and his fortune.

"Did, I suppose. At least he certainly possessed one at one time. But his removal from the South seemed to render him callous to her traditions and to her fate in the dark times that followed." I knew Dad's rebel blood was rising. "He did not come back to wear the gray when the call went out for every Southern man to rally to his country's cause—but we will not go over that ground now——"

"No—because it always hurts you."

"Yes—it hurts me. He stayed on in California, digging gold while his people were fighting——" The spray of Confederate jasmine trembled in the wind. I reached up, broke it off, and pinned it on his coat.

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He kissed my lips, and my soul right through them, then went on.

"Of course Stephan did no worse than John." I knew all about Uncle John, too. I never liked his story half so well. "John had just gone into business in New York State. He, too, turned a deaf ear to the call of his people. He, too, was making gold while his section needed him."

"And you were the only one of the three Culpepper brothers who fought?"

"Of the three reared under the same roof—the same influence—of the same stock—only me! I could hardly get to the front quick enough."

"Splendid darling! But let's not fight that awful old war over again."

"It has become necessary for me to recall the humiliating fact that neither Stephan nor John sympathized with the South in her rebellion—I am not doing it from choice. . . . Our aged father never forgave them. . . . I never looked upon either of them again. Stephan died thirty years ago, and John—is still making gold in New York."

There was a silence. Dad's head sank on his breast.

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I could feel the sting of old rancors in his heart. I said, softly:

“Maybe they thought they were in the right—and it has been so long ago——”

“Yes—so long ago!” he muttered in a sort of an echo. “Stephan, at any rate, must have seen his error, because, little woman——” Something big and hard got mixed with the Adam’s apple in his throat. “Little woman!” I knew it! I knew I was going to begin being a woman today, and be expected to do things in the world.

“What is it, Dad—oh, what is it? What’s all this got to do with me—and my birthday?” What makes women so wise? Did the Serpent teach Eve something in the Garden, that day, that somehow didn’t get into Genesis?

“How did you know it is about you, Dulcie?”

“Just ’c-a-u-s-e——” I answered, exactly as I’ve answered his questionings all my life—just as every woman has tried to explain the power that tells her things, from the day of Eve till the present hour—Selah!

“Yes, it is something that concerns you—and this birthday. I am convinced that your Uncle Stephan’s heart—or conscience—woke up

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after the war: that he regretted the negligible circumstances that had cut the old family of Culpepper apart; regretted that while his country called him he had sat neutral out there in his hole of yellow dirt! Neutral! God of my fathers! While the home of his childhood——”

“Dad—Dad, d-e-a-r!” I cooled his thin, hot cheek with mine. “It’s all over so long ago—let’s forget it.”

“That’s the cry of the times: yes, that’s the slogan of modernity: that’s the voice of your Uncle Stephan sounding down these thirty years—your Uncle Stephan’s remorseful voice trying to make amends to his own soul. ‘Forget it! Heal the breach!’ Lock hands across the rents and wounds that time itself has not thoroughly healed in our land.”

I pressed Dad’s hand to my lips. Involuntarily I glanced back at Arden Hall—looking as white as a big wedding cake in the moonlight—but I saw the mortgage like a black veil lying over it. I looked away to the silvery cotton fields—but I saw, like an army there, the eating, devastating hordes of weevils ravishing our hopes before our very eyes.

“No, not *forget*, Dad: but we will be *big*, and

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rise superior to what shall ever live deep down in our hearts."

"So great was Stephan's—regret," Dad took up his original train of thought, "that he even tried to arrange for the effecting of a reconciliation between those members of his family still alive. He made a dying man's request in his will——"

"Oh, Dad!" Here was something like romance. How the word "will" does rhyme with "thrill."

"But Stephan must have lost most of his fortune—they come and go, these mining fortunes, I am told: at any rate he seemed to have had only a small one at the time of his death——"

"But the will, Dad—the will!" I was trembling. "And me? Did he leave me something, Dad? Did—did he?"

"You are entitled to a little something—with a *stipulation*."

"Oh, Dad. I'll do anything for a little money, right now, when the house has gotten so leaky, and the cotton's going to fizzle, and taxes are due, and you need a new collar—I'm dying to stipulate."

"I hope it's not the slight monetary benefit that will accrue from the carrying out of Ste-

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phan's will that will prompt your agreement to its terms, Dulcie. With me, it's a recognition of a dying man's desire to make reparation for a life's mistake."

"Oh, you proud old beggar!" I was confident that what he said was true: the money involved in that will meant nothing to him.

"Your Uncle Stephan leaves you \$1,500 under conditions——"

"But he died before I was born—thought of——"

"True—but circumstances have made you the legal beneficiary. To be explicit, Stephan left a will in which he deeply deplored the estrangement between him and myself, and between myself and John. So he bequeathed to the eldest child of either John or myself \$1,500, provided said child should, on the attainment of his or her nineteenth birthday, go for a stay of six months into the home of the other brother. If John had first had a child to attain the stipulated age, that child would have been requested to spend six months with us at Arden—and that is what I am sure your Uncle Stephan thought would happen, as John was married, and father of a boy already in his early teens at that time. But John's boy died, and

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he never had another child by his first wife, or the lady who is the present Mrs. Culpepper: and as I have had only one, and she has just reached the required age——”

I never knew before that half that memorial apple is hidden in women's throats, and that it rises at crises in their lives to remind them of the first garden party ever given by their sex. My piece is big as half a Ben Davis, and it came up at that minute. I heard a little bit of voice squeeze out:

“Me? And I've got to—*go?*” I clung to Dad as if I were about to drown.

“Not if you do not wish to go.” He held me as if he were drowning with me.

“But the money, Dad: the fifteen hundred dollars!” I spoke of it in an awed, tremulous voice: it stood for so much to me.

“We don't need Stephan's money.”

“Don't—*don't need it?* . . . You don't think I'd *flunk*, do you, Dad? You don't think I'm *that* kind of a soldier—and me an unrepentant rebel's daughter. Of course I'm going. Why, I—I—*want* to go! I'm crazy to go! *To New York!* To visit my great, rich Uncle John, and his stepwife—I mean my stepaunt—no, my aunt-in-law—whatever do they call 'em? And

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there's somebody else—who? I can't remember, but there's somebody else."

"John wrote, very formally, on the occasion of his second marriage that the lady was a widow with one little son. . . . I suppose John will make him his heir. . . . Yes, it will be a great trip for you; educational—and—pleasant—six months with another kind of people—so if you really wish to go——"

"Wish? I'm excited to the point of madness: I'm all impatience! When'll I get the fifteen hundred?"

"At the expiration of the six months—if *you stay them out*. But if from any reason whatever—the will reads—the young person who is to be the—er——"

"Peacemaker," I finished for him. "I reckon that's what Uncle Stephan meant."

"Exactly. Stephan thought that through the medium of a young and—unprejudiced member of the family the two remnants left might become—reunited."

"So I'm going as a sort of human knitter. . . . To catch up raveled affections—mend broken family relations. . . . I fancy I'll be a dandy knitter, once I learn the stitch." Then my bravado broke—I couldn't help letting

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down. I was in Dad's arms. "Oh, but to leave you for so long, when I've never spent one single solitary night away from you in—all—my—life. You come, too. You come along."

"No, little girl, that's one of the stipulations of the will: 'Unaccompanied by any member of said son's or daughter's family.' "

"I've got to knit all alone?"

"You sha'n't go! It's too damned arbitrary a will. Stephan's conscience ought to have wakened sooner. Let his salve money go to charity. Forget all about it: I don't like the idea anyway: it looks as if we were backing down in our principles."

"But we *are* going: I tell you this part of us are—am—is—what do you say? Is going after that one thousand, five hundred, whether she does any knitting or not. She's not going to ravel any of her Dad's principles, or tangle any of her own, but—she needs to patch up Arden's roof, and make a payment on the mortgage, and—oh, Dad, what things we *can* do with fifteen hundred dollars! Yes, I will knit! I'll be glad to know my Uncle John's family, and give them a chance to know me! I expect I'll really take to Uncle John, and the stepson—I

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love little tads—— What does Uncle John get for being knit?"

"A like amount—if *you stay your time out.*"

"But I reckon it doesn't mean much to him: he's fabulously rich—isn't he?"

"You're getting addicted to hyperbole, Dulcie. Yes, I understand John ranks as more than a millionaire, and they live in great luxury."

"I'll bet their home is no prettier than Arden."

"It will be very different, of course, life in a great city."

"I'm scared—honest to goodness, I'm scared green! I've got to have Mammy with me. She's not a member of my family: I'll take her with me."

"W-h-y——" Dad began, but I shut him straight up. "I'm going to take Mammy along. I couldn't travel as far as New York City by myself. I'd die of plain, outright, Southern-country scare in a splendid city house with an Uncle John Culpepper who isn't a Culpepper inside, and an Aunt John, who isn't a Culpepper at all except by step—second step, at that. And I've never seen a white servant in my life. Who'd brush my hair? . . . Mammy gave me my first bath: her soft brown bosom

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was my first pillow; she's been my beautiful, if off-colored, foster mother for nineteen years. . . . Oh, Uncle Stephan never thought of that when he made his funny old will; he didn't think to stipulate, 'No black near-member of my family.' Mammy's going with me——"

There!—I'm run down. There's been some strain on this human clock today!—I'll continue tomorrow—How o-l-d I feel tonight! And yet I'm only one day and six hours past nineteen.

P. S.—

I remembered something, so I jumped out of bed, and that woke Mammy. The Lamar girls laugh themselves sick because she sleeps in my room, but I'd as soon think of trying to go without saying my prayers or looking under my bed. She sat straight up in hers.—Mammy does *so* look like a little circus spaniel in her right-up-and-down plain white nightie:

"Honey—whar' you gwine?"

"Into Dad's room a minute." I ran across the hall and opened his door. He was sitting with his back to it. As I tiptoed in I saw he was holding a picture—an old ambrotype of Uncle Stephan, Uncle John, and himself, taken when they were boys of sixteen, eighteen, and

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twenty—standing with their arms locked together. It has always seemed the sweetest picture to me—and the saddest, considering. His eyes were fixed upon it so intently that he did not hear me till I gulped. Then he turned, and he looked as if he had just been snatched back from his youth and a frolic with young Uncle John and young Uncle Stephan.

“Dad—I forgot something.” I fell into his lap. “Are you willing to be knitted?”

“What?” he asked huskily.

“We don’t want to get Uncle Stephan’s money on false pretenses. Are you willing to—forgive Uncle John?”

Dad cleared his throat. “Not forgive, Dulcie: I can never forgive, but—I can rise above it, now.”

Isn’t he a splendid old rebel? We sat looking at the ambrotype together. Uncle Stephan, with the square, strong jaw, the rugged nose, the jutting brows, the sculpturesque frame of dark hair (I fancy he fitted in with wild Western rocks and ravines); Uncle John, thin, pale, fair-haired, looking somehow weak and washed-out between the other two, but with a remarkable shrewdness in his small, quick eyes; and Dad with his handsome young face all fiery en-

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thusiasm—a flash of living fire he used to be on a battlefield—I have heard the old men say.

“They used to call us black Pepper—that was Stephan, white Pepper—that was John, and red Pepper—that was me, when we were boys,” said Dad.

“Thank God *red* Pepper was my Dad!”

“But the other two made successes, baby; your old faded red Pepper Dad did nothing——”

“But fight; and stand by the old home; and go down through fire and brimstone for his own people; and come out penniless and broken, with all the dross melted out of him—gold—pure gold!”

I hugged him violently, the unspoken thought of that parting drawing our lips together again. Then he lifted me in his arms, brought me across the hall, put me back in my four-poster—and stood looking down on me.

“What a kid you look, Dulcie, in that great bed: it would hold four of your size. Your Aunt Lucy and your Aunt Molly used to sleep in it.”

He loves to remember old times. Gee! when I’ve knitted up the old rents—and we get Uncle Stephan’s \$1,500!

November Fourth

Uncle Stephan left one hundred and fifty dollars to be paid immediately to whichever of the vague, spineless, blue children then groping about in the Land of Unborn Babes (idea borrowed from the Blue Bird, of course) should first get to earth and into the Culpepper family, and at the age of nineteen assume the office of family dove of peace; said sum to be used for preparatory and migratory purposes. So I, having been chosen by fate to be this human olive-branch, got this sum to buy my clothes and pay my railroad fare to New York. But there was Mammy; Uncle Stephan didn't count on her. Then there was a wardrobe to be built up from toes to topknot, so it's taken the brain of a mathematician, the ingenuity of a Robinson Crusoe, and the determination of a house-spider to get two tickets and two outfits out of the hundred and fifty; but it's all planned at last—even to the uniforms of the peace-campaigners.

Of course, I had to have a coat-suit. I found a neat little navy-blue one for fifteen dollars.

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I never had a tailored suit bought out of a shop before, and I've been standing around before mirrors ever since. I really think I look like the "Misses' or Small women's leader" on the back of a mail-order catalogue. Wearing ones-and-a-half, as I do, I got a snappy bargain in boots. I had no idea a real milliner could make such a difference in a face—having trimmed my own hats for nine years. My new little black turban has a way of perking up on one side that perfectly enthralls me. I've made three new blouses, and I felt like Miss Crœsus till out came the Lamar girls with their disconcerting questions. You know Uncle Jeffrey Lamar is U. S. Senator, and Nan and Betty have been in Washington a whole lot.

"What are you goin' to wear to afternoon things, Dulcie?" prodded Nan. "Of course your Aunt—er——"

"John."

"Your Aunt John'll take you to all kinds of things. Life in New York, you know, is principally night life—restaurants, an' dinners, an' cabaret dances, an'——"

"I—don't—know," I dragged out, dumbfounded—or is it dumbfounded? "There's my organdy——"

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"*Organdy!* Dulcie Culpepper! In New York? The White Way, an' all?"

"I—I'll start the fashion."

The organdy was my graduating dress when I finished high school two years ago. Dad wanted me to take a diploma there, though it seemed foolish to me—he had taught me a hundred times better. I've read twenty times as many books—history, poetry, and the Lord knows what else—as Betty and Nan, though they did finish at fashionable boarding-schools.

"I'll do the organdy over a little, of course, and if the White Way doesn't like me—well, it needn't look, that's all."

"Afternoons?" goaded Betty.

"I—I—don't go out afternoons: it's—it's—a constitutional oddity of mine."

But when they had gone I suffered a sinking of the spirit. Then I had an illuminating inspiration. . . . I wonder if guardian angels do concern themselves with such trivial things as their charges' clothes?—Mumsey's beautiful, glossy brown velvet that she had in her trousseau! I knew in a minute that she wished me to use it in this critical period of my life. I shall love making it over, and Dad is so pleased that I am going to wear it.

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Later.

Mammy pressed my organdy: I declare it looks spick and span new. The full skirt and fichu are right in style again.

November Tenth

I got up early this morning; who would waste a moment of the last day at home? I heard Dad cough as I tiptoed past his room—I must remind Ma'y-Ann again about that mullein syrup. I knew he was not asleep; he would not sleep on the morning of the day I am to go away.

I slipped out. A world filled with gray tulle met my eyes; the word "tulle" always did thrill me; some call it "illusion"; all illusive and elusive things are fascinating.

Of course it was only fog—Indian Summer fog—but it did make a dreamy mystery of the world. A great grayness as of smoke was everywhere, so that I could see only a few yards ahead of me. I looked back; the columned galleries of Arden Hall must be like the peristyles of ancient Greece! The great Culpepper mansion which before the war boasted that it was never without guests would be empty enough soon—I ran hard down the road. The oaks that border it were like lines of Titan soldiers in russet uniforms; the sumachs in the fields

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beyond shone like hundreds of scarlet pennants. The cedars in the old graveyard up on the hill made dark fantastic splotches against the blurred grayness. The white shafts and crosses dripped little rivulets of cold moisture down over the dead and gone Culpeppers lying below them, gathered together in that shadowy spot as they loved to gather back yonder in the big house in life. . . . I am glad they are all together! What a time the Day of Resurrection will be in that old graveyard! I sat on the marble coping of Mumsey's little grave and fancied how it will be when the call shall sound, and the dead shall live again. I think they will congregate suddenly; rising out of their crackling brown shells of graves, they will stand for one moment dazed under the old cedars, then cry aloud their joy of recognition and greeting after all those black and silent years of separation. Dad and Mumsey will fall into one another's arms, then look about for me, whom Mumsey has not seen since I was only an hour old. . . . Oh, Mumsey! I hope you will not be disappointed!

Just as I reached that thought I lifted my eyes and lo!—as they used to say in high-brow literature—a pale yellow sheen lay under the

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gray fog, just like a primrose satin slip under a gray tulle frock, and then—lo, again!—double lo! the great mass of illusion rose and melted into nothingness, and the yellow of gold lay over the world. I stood up and cried out loud:

“It’s a prophecy—here, on the morning that I start out into the big world—a woman. Gray mist may endure for an hour, but the gold of the perfect day will at last dissolve it!”

*En Route to the Culpepper
Hague Convention*

There've been so many I think I'll record only the main wonders—and blunders.

Yes, I cried—just at first. People are reluctant, you know, about leaving even for Heaven. When we were actually moving, going—going—going—I could imagine what the dying people feel when the chilly boatman taps his first soft signal against their feet.

I was still on the platform, and I stretched my arms back to Dad, standing with his hat off, smiling and straight—like a soldier about to be shot for his cause—the wind waving his white hair like a good-by flag at me. He blew me the gayest thistledown of a kiss from his shaking finger-tips—I saw that they shook, even from that distance. I believe I would have tried to jump off, but Mammy had an arm about me. Of course I cried. Mammy led me in with my face hidden on her shoulder. People were looking at us when I finally got my head up. . . . There aren't any other girls on this train traveling with their mummies. . . . A lovely

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woman from Philadelphia got up and came over to my seat. She took off my hat and gloves while Mammy wet a towel, wiped off my face, and then got out her dear homey old camphor bottle. I felt a little better. The lady had seen Dad on the platform, and sort o' knew I didn't have any mother. She said it was the prettiest thing she ever saw—Mammy and I together. "It precisely fills one's ideals of Southern life," she said. . . . Mammy and I aren't traveling around filling ideals—we're just plain doing as we do every day at home.

The whole internal part of me ached awfully all afternoon. It made me forget that this is my maiden trip in a sleeper. Mammy had brought a big lunch basket—but fried chicken-breast only recalled the lonely gizzards and livers we had left behind for Dad—and I was so full of ache there was no room for food. If you can be paid in cold cash for blistering inside hurts I've already earned half of Uncle Stephan's \$1,500.

They let niggers sleep in Pullmans if they accompany white ladies as maids or nurses; Mammy passes as my one-or-the-other, so she was to stretch her little old brown limbs—clean as rainwashed pine trees in the forest—in one

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of their little tomb-beds. But when we got ready to retire we found we were not booked for the same section. I was billed to sleep in lower 11, and Mammy in upper 8. They made down No. 11, cut it off from the world by a green curtain, and I peeped in. I wasn't sure whether I was going to feel like Desdemona in the last act of Othello, or Juliet in the tomb of the Capulets—but that wasn't what was bothering me.

“Who's going to sleep up there?” I asked the shoe-polish-colored porter who—on account of Mammy—had attended me as if I had been a princess all afternoon.

“Dat reserbation am f'r someun dat gets on in de night, Miss.”

“Somebody—*strange*—going to sleep up there—behind the same curtain—as myself?” I gasped. “I've never slept in the room with a strange somebody in my life—let alone behind a curtain in a six-by-four box. . . . Where's Mammy's—sarcophagus?”

He thought it a perfectly legitimate new name that he had never heard for berth. “Yo' maid's s'coppagus am jes 'cross de aisle, Miss—upper 8.”

“Why can't we swap? Let Mammy sleep up over me, and the lady who is going to get on

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during the night occupy the sky-bedroom over 8?"

" 'Tain't 'lowed, miss; we can't change 'em. I'd do hit f'r you an' yo' ole maid——"

"Mammy's no 'old maid,' " I broke in indignantly. "She was married at seventeen, and she has a daughter of forty-seven who is cooking for my father this minute. Mammy's a merry widow, I'd have you to understand."

Pete grinned all over himself. "I'd know you was fr'm de Souf even in Wash'ton, miss; you sho' got de Souvern ways. Dey ain't nebber too put out to hab dey little jokses—de full-blown Souberner ain't. I meaned yo' ladies' maid. I wush we could eggchange—but 'tain't 'lowed."

"Then I'll sleep up above; I don't like just that curtain between me and the great world. I'll roost high. Can't I make that change?"

"Suttenly, miss; de pussom what holds upper 11'll be glad 'nuff t' change f'r lower. An' I got another ijer——"

"I knew you could scrape one up from somewhere—a bright fellow like you."

"If hit'd be any—er—consolation to yer t' hev yo' maid—er widder—nex' to yer, upper 13 am allers 'signed to de day porter—dat's

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me; I kin sleep some'ers else dis trip an' Mrs.—er—Mammy—kin okkipy de upper berf nex' to you, whar you could call 'er ef you wanted to."

"Oh, will you, Pete! That's the true Southern chivalry. That's just what my Dad would have done in a case like this."

Mammy once went to Richmond with Mumsey, so she piloted me to the dressing-room. Everyone else was entombed when I stole back up that long dim green aisle. Pete had waited up to make Mammy comfortable for the night—he has an old granny himself in New Orleans, and he'd want any porter to do as much for her. A little step-ladder stood before the parted curtains of No. 11. I was beginning to feel rather breezy—I always do over any larky experience—and scorning Pete's help, like a queen, or an acrobat, I mounted to my high estate.

It was really jolly up there, not nearly so tomblike, because of that blessed crack between me and the ceiling. I peeped over my foot-board—sure enough! I could see into the next sarcophagus where Mammy was to repose. I overwhelmed Pete with thanks and two nickels; he moved the step-ladder on for Mammy to mount, and as I had no rope-ladder with me I

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was cut off from the world. I peeped down; anyway, it wasn't far to the edge of lower 11, and if there were a fire I could scramble down. Mammy in her brown wrapper came crawling up, and peeping over, I had to laugh at her efforts to get her stiff old legs inside her berth. Then we squeezed hands over our footboards; Mammy kissed my fingers, and I cuddled down, trying not to think of Dad and my big empty four-poster at home. . . . I fell asleep and dreamed I was a little girl again and Mammy was rocking me in her lap. . . .

I woke with an awful thirst—one of those broiled-ham thirsts that you can't think down. I argued with my dry and fretful palate that I was high up in mid-air, and all connections with the world of ice-water coolers cut off—it still demanded a "jink." The very statement of the impossibility of a quench roused the fury of my burning tongue. I peeped out. No step-ladder anywhere. It was evidently like Jacob's—you only *ascended* upon it. I peered over at Mammy; the little old brown dear lay still as a cocoon. I peeped out again; no Pete, no Rastus, in sight—only a long dim tunnel of green damask. One could so easily step into the dressing-room if one were only on *terra-firma*—or *floora*—

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bus-movabus—and it wasn't far down. That lower rail was really no step at all to me, so gifted in the graceful and girlish art of climbing up or down. The lady who had come in during the night doubtless was soundly sleeping—I sidled to the edge of the berth and stretched down my right leg . . . the sole of my stockinged foot landed on something smooth and warm and convex—and much nearer than I had calculated the rail to be. It instantly slid from under my foot, and I popped out my head. Horror of horrors! I had planted my foot plumb down on the pinky bald pate of a large man in lilac pajamas—a perfectly good fat man engaged in the innocent act of leaving the berth for which he had paid his perfectly good money, with the intention, like myself, of allaying a thirst at a blessed water-cooler somewhere at the other end of the car!

I crumpled back into my berth and jerked the covers up over my burning and humiliated cheeks. . . . Then—a gust of laughter sprang up in me. I laughed and laughed, with the pillows over my mouth. Then as the gale subsided I felt my thirst again. I sat up and cautiously peeped out: Oh, Glory! There was the night porter passing down the aisle.

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"Jim, Jim," I softly called. "For pity's sake come here. I'm dying of thirst. Hurry—hurry! Before that lavender individual gets back. I've got to have some water."

"I'll bring the ladder, miss," he said. "Why didn't you ring yo' bell fo' this?"

I write myself down as the deepest emerald-tinted country bumpkin that ever got into a Pullman car—there had been a bell there in reach of my hand all the time I had been suffering.

"I didn't care to get down," I answered proudly. "I wish you to *hand me up* a glass of water—very, very cold!"

"Certainly, miss—certainly."

It was so good my hauteur cooled with my tongue.

"I—haven't—traveled much——" I meekly admitted as I returned the pitcher and glass.

"The finest ladies ain't always the ones what's the mostest on the trains," epigrammatically replied Jim, and catching a dim gleam of lilac far up the aisle, I shut the curtains on further wisdom, and was shivering slightly under my covers when I heard a significant plump in the berth below.

Second Night Out
Ten P. M.

He's quite as fat in his gray traveling suit (clothes aren't as kind to men as they are to women) as he was in his lavender pajamas. He's just as pinky bald, but he doesn't nearly so much suggest a mold of diluted grape gelatine with a pale cherry on top. His clothes do fit him elegantly; he has a kindly, alert, interesting face that you wonder about.

Each in the privacy of a big magazine we sat opposite one another for a whole hour this morning, when suddenly from behind his page I caught a faint convulsive snort. I had borne guilty silence as long as I could, anyway. I snapped down my screen, and looked full at the pictorial glories on the back of his.

"Excuse me," I spoke valiantly, as the daughter of a rebel soldier ought to do in times of challenge, or capitulation; "I beg pardon for stepping on your head last night."

His screen came down. His black eyes gaped unwinkingly—then he said with almost unnatural gravity:

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“Don’t mention it; you only followed a very ancient precedent—that of bruising the head of the serpent with the woman’s heel.”

“Oh, but not the—er—you know—smooth and totally unprotected pate of a quite defenseless, nice gentleman—there’s no precedent for that. No female, except myself, was ever so—rude as to do that, I’m sure.”

Then we both broke out laughing, and laughed a long time without speaking—just like two old friends—looking at each other—the tears finally rolling down his cheeks. Then I sobered, and explained how it was my first night in a sleeper, and all about my thirst. Finally I got in a little about Dad, and Uncle John in New York. You never in your life saw a big, bald face get sober and utterly kind so quickly. He might have been my own uncle for the actual interest he took. He got out a real leather card-case, and from it a card—engraved:

Auguste Bindmann

Where had I heard that name? All at once I gasped at him—what a friend is one’s subconscious self! How it does come to one’s aid sometimes!

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“Not—the great—theatrical manager?”

“The same,” he smiled, as if I had said something funny, and I felt just as comfortable as if our family pastor were traveling along with me.

“W-e-l-l—I reckon I’m the only woman in the country who ever stepped on the head of Auguste Bindmann!” and we laughed again.

“I like novel situations,” he answered, and he ate lunch with me out of our big lunch basket, and vowed he had never tasted such fried chicken and fig preserves in his life. This evening he would make me have dinner with him in the diner—and tonight I am installed in lower 11—Mammy is sleeping over me, and Mr. Bindmann is in upper 13—he would have it so. Now that is just the thing my Dad would have done under the circumstances. Why, he’s just like a Southerner, except for his raspy r’s—and his quick, decided way of doing things. If Uncle John’s anything like him this peace-party expedition will be no more than putting a saucer of cream down between Tom and Tabby during one of their feline spats.

New York
November Fourteenth

I'm here!

My first distinct thought was: What wonderful people to be able to walk about alone in this immense maze of houses and human beings!

My first sensation occurred when a small, trimly hatted and coated young woman stepped knowingly up to where I stood dazed and dumb in my tracks, and in that big station, and remarked as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world:

"This is Miss Culpepper from Mississippi, I believe."

I was struck all in a heap that the second wife of my aged relative should be so young and blooming.

"Yes," I replied, "and this is my Aunt John?"

The young lady gasped slightly, and I hastened to explain apologetically: "I've always called you Aunt John, because I never could remember your given name, and——"

"But," the sophisticated young woman

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smiled, then checked herself, with a show of humility, "I'm Tinie—Mrs. John Culpepper's maid. . . . Mrs. Culpepper said you'd have *almost* red hair, and be very little. The car's waiting. Which is your hand luggage? Willis will take your trunk checks."

I had thought all white maids wore little specks of aprons and frills on their heads—they do in the picture-shows; this girl's coat-suit was smarter than my own.

"Is my Uncle sick?" I asked, wondering at his failure to come to meet me.

"Oh, no, Mr. Culpepper is as well as usual," the maid answered, quite as if nothing had happened.

"Very busy," I inferred to myself. "But his wife—my aunt—she is not well, I reckon?"

"Mrs. Culpepper is well—she's never sick. She is at one of her clubs this afternoon."

At one of her clubs! I knew she must have had some very important business that she couldn't possibly put off. Of course they are busy people in New York; I mustn't expect them to be leisurely, with time for anything on earth, like folks down home.

"Come, Mammy," I said. The stylish young woman looked with quick amazement at the

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little old brown one, standing quite still with her old shiny black bag in one hand and my new suitcase in the other.

"This woman isn't with you? She didn't come with you?"

"Why, that's Mammy!" There was wide astonishment in my Aunt John's maid's eyes—and something like a flash of amused scorn—but she instantly checked herself: "Oh, of course," she said, as she gave Mammy a little superior nod and reached for my suitcase. Mammy and I followed her, rather close together.

How do people live indoors eternally? Or with no outdoors but these streets that are no more like God's natural world than wine is like water. It makes my head dizzy—New York's outdoors. No trees—no flowers—no great unpeopled spaces in which to walk, to run, to hide, to think, to *be*! My Uncle John's home is jammed in like part of a solid brown stone wall and the other people's parts on either side of you kind of shut off your breath. It's not half as beautiful on the outside as Arden. There's more furniture on the inside—you fairly run into furniture, and curtains, and carpeted stairs—but it's all dim and dark and splendid

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and bewildering. There isn't a sweep of rooms as stately as the great double parlors at home. I wonder if their souls don't get kind of drawn up, living as cramped as this! And their hearts sort of stuffy and close!

"I don't know what to do about the—er—colored lady," the maid hesitated, after showing the men where to place my trunk. "I know Mrs. Culpepper didn't expect you'd bring your maid with you."

"My Mammy," I corrected, with distinct didactiveness—that's a good word I've just acquired.

"Your—er—*Mammy*! I can't put her anywhere till Mrs. Culpepper gets home, so if that's her trunk——" she pointed to the funny little old zinc affair.

"That's her trunk, and you can put it in there with mine. Mammy's never slept out of my room since I was born—and she'll have a bed in here with me."

The maid gasped. "Our maids sleep in the servants' rooms—I'm sure Mrs. Culpepper won't allow her in here—a *colored* person, too."

"Uncle John helped to *free* the colored people. Aunt John makes beautiful speeches about treating all human beings—white, black and

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coffee-colored—alike; about the universal brotherhood of man—my Uncle John sent one of 'em South to Dad to read. I reckon Mammy will sleep in my room." I began to feel all the red (Cul) pepper stir in me. "She's more beautifully clean than half the white people. I'll buy her a quilt and pillow, and she'll roll up there on the rug if she can't do any better; but let me tell you, she'll go home and tell every nigger in Mississippi how you Yankees treated her up North. . . . Put her trunk in there." I pointed to the lovely little dressing-room attached to my apartment. The maid wanted to unpack for me, but Mammy squelched that. She said loftily:

"I allers 'tend t' my baby-chile's cloves myse'f; I'm gwine t' unpack 'er twunk."

The girl flared up. "I've been ladies' maid to some of the swellest ladies in New York, I'll have you to understand. I've dressed some of our famous actresses."

"Down Souf," Mammy said with quiet dignity, "our ladies don't *kere* f'r white fo'kes what put deyselbes in de place of niggers."

But when I'd had a bath in that beautiful rose-colored tub, and felt the cool, smooth touch of fresh undermuslins against my flesh, and

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Mammy had given my hair a brisk brushing, and Tinie (called Teenie, if you please) came rolling in a funny cross between a table and a baby-buggy, on top of which were lovely tea-things and umph-oo!—*such* sandwiches and little cakes!—my physical sense of well-being prompted a state of spiritual kindliness, and I smiled so warmly on the snappy little maid—who really can't help having been born in the land of white servants—that we all got quite friendly over the tea what-you-may-call-it, and Tinie even complimented my hair, hanging loose. "It's the grandest *real* hair I ever saw," she said, taking up a big handful and letting it sift through her fingers. "It reminds me of Madame—I didn't catch the great name—Somebody's Titian wig that she bought in Paris and paid I don't know how much for—and your eyes are just the same color."

Mammy was mollified, as she always is when anybody says anything nice about her "baby-chile."

I put on my Georgette crêpe blouse. Nan Lamar had advised that a dressy blouse is always a safe thing in the big cities. I love the way one's flesh shows palely pink through crêpe! I also put on my bronze slippers—and

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ditto stockings—and felt regally dressed. I got ready early. I was sure Uncle John would run in to see me as soon as he could get home from the bank, and Aunt John the minute she could get loose from that stupid club business. But it grew dusk outside, and the street flared into a line of wonderful lights before I got a sign from them or anything outside my own room. At last Tinie came for me. Dinner was ready, and Uncle and Aunt John were waiting downstairs. Mrs. Culpepper had been frightfully put out about Mammy, Tinie confided, but she had gotten over it; Mrs. Culpepper had “wonderful executive ability”—a phrase caught, I suppose, from the lady’s own lips. Tinie would come back presently and conduct Mammy to the servants’ regions somewhere below.

I followed her down the soundless stairs. I reckon my heart *was* pounding, but I kept thinking of Dad and his unalterable soldier front. They were waiting in the reception hall below—drawn up stiff as a firing line—and I came down with a figurative peace flag in my hand.

I looked at Uncle John first. How small he was!—almost meager—with a scant, whitey look about the hair; a little, sharp-cut face from which a pair of small, ferret-like eyes

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glanced upward at me. Beside him—taller by some inches—loomed Aunt John. She looked square, hard and flat. She showed a wide waist and wider shoulders; pale-brown, hewn-out arms—more like an athlete's than a woman of fashion's. Her face, even in that first glance, reminded me of a physiognomy cut out of some kind of darkish rock. Her cold eyes shone forth as if carved out of a vein of black onyx. The only soft thing about her was a down on her thin, firm upper lip—and I don't know that that ever stands for softness in a woman. She looked me over from my bronze ankles to my auburn topknot as I came down the stairs. I'm afraid I didn't wave the peace flag as I had intended. I saw at a glance that she was captain of *that* regiment—and she not a really-and-truly Culpepper at all!

She advanced—not Uncle John; he stood irresolute—I suspected him of cowardice. She held out—or up and then down—a hand. I went straight past it—straight at Uncle John. His was the human soul Uncle Stephan had meant I should attack. I felt his blood in me at that moment, and Dad's, and Uncle John's own—when he was seventeen and used to stand locked between the other two, as I had seen

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them in the old ambrotype at home. I felt the thrill of consanguinity run all through me, and I threw up my arms and fastened them about Uncle John's little old neck, white as a shriveled Cape Jasmine. He gave a start; his arms leaped out like a real, human man's, and grasped me—then his eyes frightenedly met Aunt John's stony stare; all life went out of him, and he touched me as mechanically as a toy whose spring has been suddenly cut. Poor, poor, wabbly Uncle John! I reckon he's been so all his life—the puppet of other wills in all matters except money-making. Maybe he ran all to money-sense and sentiment. But I had squeezed him tight, and kissed him hard beneath his little, straight-cut, bristly white mustache before he flunked on his embrace, and of course I couldn't take mine back. I cried out:

“Oh, Uncle John, I'm so glad to—you know—start getting acquainted with you!” and I don't believe it displeased him. I saw his keen blue eyes soften—I *did!*—before I turned to his second wife. I took her fingers and I said in a perfectly natural way in answer to her chill, thin, deeply-toned “Pleased to meet you,” “Glad to know you.”

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"What did I understand her given name to be, John?"

"Dulcie," I answered for him.

"But that is some—er—contraction, of course; some—er—pet name——"

"That's all the name I have, and it was my mother's before me."

I glanced beyond the vanguard of the resisting army, to the only other part of it that I had not attacked. That part—or party—was young and tall, and his proper home was in the pages of the best illustrated fiction magazine of America, but he had materialized into flesh and blood, and evidently meant to feed his splendid young person at the table of my uncle and step-aunt tonight. He advanced.

"It sounds to me like the name of some wonderful Southern confection—'Dulcie.' " He smiled charmingly. "Ripe figs crystallized in sugar! It's a perfect little name. Am I not going to be presented, Mother?"

Her eyes batted a bat; her brown hands snapped one upon the other. She was general of *that* regiment, but there was one private of whose opinion she was powerfully careful.

"My son, Orrin Castleton—Dulcie."

Son! Orrin! Orrin Castleton! How per-

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fectly stupid that I had let a dozen years slip by uncounted, and had expected to see my uncle's wife's little boy just as he looked in the photograph sent at the time of the marriage. I'm afraid I gasped and stood staring, until Aunt John brought my senses back with a thump:

"I thought you would be ready for dinner—Dulcie."

I knew in a minute that she was not pleased at the mildly pleasant thing her son had said to me. I also knew that she knew I was dressed expressly for dinner. I turned my eyes on her, and in one infinitely small moment I saw my Uncle John's wife outside and inside—every detail of her; I don't believe I'll ever have occasion to change my estimate. I saw a cold, egotistical, imperialistic, unrelenting inside, and I saw—of more pertinence just then—an exterior clad—or partially clad—in a regular evening gown of silk that glistened like amethyst rock-crystal. I saw, out of the tail of my eye, that Uncle John was wearing a little claw-hammer, that Orrin showed a sumptuous expanse of white in front, and I knew that my Georgette blouse—magnificent as I had thought it at home—was in no way adequate, or suffi-

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ciently *inadequate*, for the New York millionaire's dinner table. I might have blenched: if there is any one brand of artillery fire that is apt to strike at the cowardly cells of feminine soldiers, it is the shots and shells sent from fashion's cannon. My weakest point had been touched. I was not properly dressed—or *undressed*. My stepaunt's rocky plateau of bared chest, and the visible curves of her dark bosom, gave me that ocular information. I might have crumpled with mortification, but just at that minute I somehow seemed to feel Uncle Stephan's big spirit upholding me, reminding me that I am my Dad's own daughter and must be too big to be snubbed or humiliated by anything as small as clothes. So I just had a kind of peacefully buoyant feeling all through me as I answered:

"I'm just a country girl, Aunt John, and not used to putting on evening dress for sup—I mean dinner. Besides I've got only one," and I laughed as if it were a good joke.

Aunt John took the arm of her tall, handsome son, leaving me to come in with little old wizened Uncle John. I believe Orrin scolded his mother on the way, because her eyes snapped and her cheeks had two scarlet spots in them

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when I looked at her from my seat at the table. But Orrin Castleton hardly noticed me any more. While Uncle John asked restrained questions about Dad, and Arden, and Mississippi, Orrin fell into a sort of unconsciousness of all around him. I noticed Aunt John glance at him from time to time with uneasy scrutiny. She was kept pretty busy, though, throughout that dinner of many courses, keeping down Uncle John's threatened rise of boyish memories, and bringing Orrin's thoughts back to time and place, without directing them to me. She asked questions concerning his day at the office, so I got the information that Orrin is a lawyer and that his mother is immensely interested in his progress in his profession. She talked a little to me about the fatigue and inconvenience of travel, which set me to laughing because it brought to mind my first night in a sleeping car. I told the joke on myself, and Uncle John cackled with laughter, but Aunt John set her lips the harder:

“What a—a—dreadful, dangerous thing to happen to a young girl traveling alone! I hope you had the conductor move you the next morning, and the man did not—er—try to—to—take advantage of your—ignorance.”

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"Oh, no, we got to be the best of friends, and he did the moving. I'm going to call on him real soon—he gave me a season pass—it's Mr. Auguste Bindmann."

Orrin shot me one quick look of interest—the first real look he had given me since we met. Aunt John launched into a lecture regarding past and future acquaintance with theatrical managers. A frown grew between Orrin's gray eyes. After a little he broke his oppressive silence:

"Aren't you putting it on a little too thick, Mom?" he asked. I wondered then, and wonder now, at the little touch of personal irony in his tone, and the look she shot him. He went out immediately after dinner and Aunt John spoke of a concert of which she was a patroness, and which she could not miss. Uncle John looked helplessly unhappy. I agreed I would like to go to bed early—and so here we are—Mammy and I—alone and at peace in the enemy's camp.

She is asleep—poor old dear, tuckered out from her journey—in the little white bed we found set up in my dressing-room. Of course I see a strenuous campaign ahead of me, but tonight at least there's a blessed cessation of

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activities. I've got so much to think of I can't write any more.

To think of it, Fifth Avenue, the wonderful, just round the corner, two doors away!

Résumé

Uncle John's a coward.

Aunt John's an autocrat.

Orrin Castleton has something on his mind.

I shall have *earned* my \$1,500 when the six months is over, whether I've got a white feather to carry back to Arden, or not.

One week later

I want really to *deserve* that money. I want to give Uncle Stephan's ghost value received. I don't want merely to *stay* in the home of my Uncle John Culpepper the required six months—not simply carry out the letter of the law, but to fulfill the spirit of it and bridge over the long estrangement between Uncle John and Dad. But how am I going to do it if I never get a chance at Uncle John? If the first week is a fore-glimpse of my stay I'll have only the merest bowing acquaintance with the gentleman when the time is up. I see clearly that Aunt John—whose name really is Electra—has ideas of her own concerning this factional coolness in the Culpepper family, and that she prefers the breach to remain unhealed. Also I am wise enough—in spite of my few years and limited stature—to reason out the reason. Rich Culpepper estranged from poor Culpepper will see no occasion for remembering said poor Culpepper in the final disposition of his fortune, which will suit the widow of said rich Culpepper better than if said rich Culpepper, in the soft-

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ness of long-suppressed brotherly affection, should feel inclined to change his will and leave said poor Culpepper (or his natural heir) a generous bit of said rich Culpepper's money. Oh, yes; I see the strategic movement of the real general of the enemy's forces, but she can't work against ghosts. She's got to reckon with Uncle Stephan's spirit, too. Uncle Stephan's ever-present and all-seeing ghost, I hereby appoint you my aide-de-camp!

Yes, my uncle's second wife is a great old strategist. She has managed that not one minute of this week have I spent alone with Uncle John. With apparent great interest and hospitality she has been showing me the sights—those proper for a perfectly nice young girl to see—they haven't included the White Way, or a single cabaret. We've done the afternoon things with some of Aunt's club friends; the evening concerts, lectures, and the like with some of the most colorless young men I have ever met. Uncle John is always "so busy" or "so tired" that he never goes with us. We went last night to the most "purposeful" (and the driest) play in town. Aunt John's intimate friend, Mrs. Vanderwand, and her only son, Clarence, went with us. Mrs. V. is a wealthy

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widow—a member of the same suffrage club as my stepaunt; also the same Social Purity League, Better Babies Circle, Working-Woman's Protective and Advisory Guild, etc., etc., etc. I have discovered that my uncle's family do not cavort around with the really smart set: they live the two-doors-off-Fifth-Avenue life, belonging to what may be called the second stratum of rich people, and Aunt John goes in for the purposeful and uplifting, rather than the gay and giddy things in life. Mrs. Vanderwand does the same, and Clarence does as his mother tells him. Aunt John says—a little wistfully—that he has never disobeyed her slightest command in his life—he looks it! Mrs. V. is fat and talks fast, in a heavy, asthmatic voice, and she writes for magazines. Clarence is small and spineless, and has an ingrowing chin. He brushes his clay-colored hair so slickly and flatly back that it would make a splendid dancing floor for flies. He uses a monocle and lisps. Mrs. Vanderwand tries out her magazine articles on him, and he appears very weary and fagged. He protected us three women to see the play last night!

Aunt John constantly engaged Mrs. Vanderwand's attention, and Clarence and I were left

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to amuse each other. I soon began to understand this maneuver. If Clarence Vanderwand should become interested in me, how much of my time he might consume! Uncle John at the bank all day, and Clarence calling on me nearly every evening—no, Aunt John, dearie! You are going to have a little work yourself, thwarting the purpose of Uncle Stephan's will.

I refused Mr. Vanderwand's invitation to go to the theater this evening: I have designs on another man tonight! I've had headache all day—started it this morning. You can't drag out a young girl with headache, can you?

Why has not my aunt's handsome and interesting lawyer son been called on to do some escort duty this week? Why does he have that absolutely impersonal gaze even when, with faultless courtesy, he talks to me across the dinner table? Oh, I can tell when a man looks at you without seeing you. Now, Clarence has already begun devouring me with his eyes—I can't bear to be devoured behind a monocle! Orrin couldn't tell you this minute whether my hair is red or black, I'll bet. Yes, it's been a slow week in military matters.

I've had the drollest, gayest, l-o-n-g-e-s-t letters from Dad—they look suspicious! I re-

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peated one of the funny negro stories out of his latest letter at the dinner table last night. Uncle John cackled. I am confident that for a moment he was a boy again back on the old plantation, listening to the soft sparkle of darky wit. Aunt John brought him back the next minute.

“That is the very thing that has impeded the progress of the negro in the South,” she said severely. “These poor unfortunates are encouraged to be clowns rather than purposeful beings of responsibility. If the Southerner could only realize his opportunity for good——”

“Oh, mother!” Orrin himself had laughed heartily at my story. “Don’t take up the South’s problem; you’ve got enough on you—you and Mrs. Vanderwand—solving those of New York City, and New England, and throwing out a life-line now and then to the benighted citizens of Europe, Asia and Africa. . . . Cleverly told, Miss Culpepper,” he finished, smiling just as if I had been a talking machine, or a Fourth of July orator.

Aunt John was furious, but she never scolds Orrin—never.

November Thirtieth

I've found out the cause of Orrin's pre-occupied manner and his almost feverish impatience to get away evenings—also of Aunt John's uneasiness concerning her one and only idol. Tinie whispered the secret to Mammy. . . . Orrin is madly infatuated with an actress—isn't it smart-setty, and Vanity-Fairish, and just as it should be? I almost forgave him for being blind towards me. She acts in one of the Broadway companies—*not* Mr. Bindmann's. Aunt John is determined that her son shall not be scooped in by any actress, and, besides, she doesn't like this particular one, though, according to Tinie, "They couldn't nobody believe anything wrong about her. She looks like an angel, and Mr. Orrin's just daffy about her."

Her name is Dawn Fairfield, and I'm wild to see her. If I slipped that tip to Orrin he might take me to her theater, but wouldn't Aunt John interfere? I don't think she'd like me to be even a side attraction to her wonderful son.

December First

Aunt John gave a dinner party this evening. She had the Vanderwands—an idea! why don't I get Clarence to take me to see Dawn play? A couple of married people of more or less heaviness of talk and appetite—wish Uncle and Aunt John ran a little more to our Southern idea of New York high life! *And Professor Bubbles!*

If that name has created for you any mental picture of human airiness, erase it. He is a biologist, and traces life back to germs and protoplasms for the edification of the young women at Castle Heights, a select school somewhere up on the Hudson, where they prepare earnest (and wealthy) girls for Vassar and other awe-inspiring places. Aunt John had already told me this as a sort of warning to work all the yeast from my mental composition and be as solid and heavy as possible. I wonder if she's despaired of Clarence and has thought of the biologist for me? Why doesn't she ring in a real live man, with an eye set toward the Great White Flare that I glimpse as

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we nightly glide into the outer dimness of lecture halls and propriety? Orrin rushes toward it, like the fortunate moth; but alas! it would be inconvenient to take along a little, can't-get-at-the-flame female moth like me. The essence of the light—as I understand it—has sex, the thing that gives it its lure for you must be of an opposite sex from yours. Of course Dawn is the feminine flame that draws Orrin there.

But to return to my Bubble blowing. The professor is tall and thin, with waving longish sorrel hair, and poor blue eyes that look as if filmed over by thin cataracts. Of course he wears glasses—big ones—on both eyes. He blinks and shambles and drawls. He appears detached from robust, developed life—as if he were still partly in the protoplasm state himself—but I'm sure the soul is all there.

I wore my white organdy. Dad had sent a great Grand Duke jasmine—it was so sweet! I wore it where my fichu crosses over the bust. I had my hair piled high and Mammy had pinned all the curled ends about and over the knot. I was so sorry Orrin didn't stay to that dinner. Tinie told Mammy he had pleaded another engagement and that Aunt John had made

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a scene over it. It did seem ugly in Orrin—but maybe when I'm in love—well, I was assigned to Professor Bubbles for dinner. I felt my yeast rising the moment I was presented to him.

“Ah!” I said, with mock demureness. “‘The earth hath bubbles as the water has’,” quoting, of course, from “Macbeth.” He blinked down at me; he lost a beat in our syncopated walk to the dining-room.

“H—m! Did I understand you to mean—?”

“Nothing; I never do mean anything,” I rushed along, wondering what I had meant. “I just say things that come to me—irrelevantly, generally.”

“H-o-w extraordinary!” he looked at me more closely, as if he were trying to discover what could have happened to me in the making. “And interesting! Your irrelevant and unintentional quotation had a clear and concise connection with my family name—really extraordinary!”

“Yes, that's the funny part of it; my random remarks usually do have some connection with something—that's what bothers me about them. I never know what I'm going to say or how they may touch really serious and solemn things.”

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"I must think it over—observe the case—with your permission, of course!"

He rubbed his palms together as my hand clung to his limp arm. "I shall find great pleasure in—er—pursuing the study." Heavens! I'm to be pursued by Professor Bubbles.

Aunt John had more than the usual array of silver implements laid alongside our plates. Clarence was seated on the other side of me, and to him I murmured confidently:

"You'll have to tip me off about all these little shovels and picks. I live where they still take soup from a soup-plate and eat ice-cream from a spoon."

Clarence, who doesn't know a joke from a potato, and who has often been reprimanded by his mother for not responding to some bit of humor in one of her ponderous magazine articles, thought he had at last recognized one, and repeated my remark for a *bon mot*. Professor Bubbles again murmured his interest in my peculiar mental development, and Mrs. Vanderwand, wishing to encourage Clarence in his recognition of humor and the Professor in his psychological investigation, asked (get that in your mind, please, asked, not asked): "Is it really different with you in the S-o-u-t-h, if I

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may ask?" (*Ask again!*) "What would be served at dinner with you?"

"Mother'll make copy of you if she can," warned Clarence, elated with himself for having started a topic of conversation.

"A good dinner with us," I reflected, "would begin with chicken gumbo, thick with okra, rice and young corn."

"O—h!" sighed Uncle John, taking his cup of weak bouillon down from his lips.

"Turkey—a big gobbler—cooked golden-brown on the outside—tender and juicy on the inside."

"At the other end of the board (they still *groan* in the South) a little pig, as crisp as his cousin turk', resting in a nest of transparent yellow yams. Rice—each grain a pearl, apart; molds of jelly, like big, quivering jewels; sweet peach pickles——"

"H-u-s-h, Dulcie!" Uncle John's mouth under his stubby white mustache fairly quivered. Everybody laughed.

"Wonderful descriptive powers," Professor Bubbles murmured, professionally.

"That's a sample," I finished; "you can imagine the rest, or if any of you will come down to Mississippi sometime next au-

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turnn"—I looked meaningly at Uncle John—"I'll give you the whole menu on our great old mahogany table in the big dining-room at Arden—you remember it, Uncle John?" Again I saw his mustache shake—and his blue eyes got kind of misty.

"Do continue," insisted Mrs. Vanderwand.

"Well, of course a salad; then for dessert—we still call all sweets dessert in the South—a Queen-of-All-Puddings, a layer of fig jam on top, meringue like pale brown foam—then heavenly sauce poured over your big helping—or ambrosia—layers of sliced orange with layers of juicy grated cocoanut, and baskets of cake—white cake, the kind brides have; cake yellow as baked sunshine; peach-blossom cake—fruit-cake, bursting with goodies; and then your little cup of coffee that smells and tastes like happiness—the sweetest, most old-fashioned happiness of all your life—that's a good dinner down South."

Clap—clap—clap! They applauded as if I had said a speech.

"I wush" (notice the pronunciation) "one of our magazines had that." This from Mrs. Vanderwand, her uncorseted figure trembling with the effort of conversation after a

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hearty meal. . . . "Do you know—ah? I've always wushed to he-äh Dixie—the rā-äl, true, Southern Dixie sung by a rā-äl Southerner. A poet friend of mine once described having heard it sung by the—er—natives, and I've craved the experience ever since. You seem a genuine little Southerner just as I've fäncied them——"

"I am!" I said proudly, "and my Dad's the last unrepentant rebel left in the South."

"Dulcie!" warned Aunt John.

"Do not scold her," Mrs. Vanderwand hastened to plead; "I am intensely enjoying the study of a type."

I felt like a germ. Then my "native" blood bounded.

"I'll sing it for you—right here."

I rose from my seat, and sprang up into my chair. My cheeks burned hot. I clasped my hands together, and raised my voice. Oh, how I sang! believe me, I sang! All my love and longing for old Mississippi—all my pride in its brave present, my tears for its past struggles, were in my voice, and I didn't care if they were. I could see the magnolias, and smell them. I could see the fields of boll-weevil-eaten cotton, and the swarms of tattered negroes anxiously wandering through them. I could see Arden

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like a stately palace going down into ruins, and Dad, arms aggressively folded and chest up, a position he always takes when Fate challenges him. I sang the original words:

“I wish I was in de land ob cotton,
Old times dar am not forgotten,
Look away, look away, look away, Dixie land.
In Dixie land, whar I was born in,
Early on one frosty mornin’,
Look away, look away, look away, Dixie land.

Den I wish I was in Dixie,
Hooray, hooray!
In Dixie land I’ll take my stand
To lib an’ die in Dixie,
Away, away, away down South in Dixie.”

I swore it—I sobbed it, and when I came back with a thump to my senses they were all standing, as you stand when you hear the Star-Spangled Banner; Mrs. Vanderwand was wiping her eyes—they say she’s temperamental. Uncle John suddenly came to me and took my hand:

“It’s a great old land, Dulcie,” he murmured to me. “And you’re—you’re—a great little girl!” One engagement won! Hurrah! Aunt John cleared her throat and led the way out of

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the dining-room. But Mrs. Vanderwand couldn't let the subject go, and Mrs. V. is the only human being, except Orrin, to whom Aunt John bows the head in submission. Mrs. V. asked if I didn't know some negro stories. Of course I know dozens, and when Professor Bubbles and all the others insisted that I tell one I mentally scratched my head, and repeated the one that Mammy had told Dad last Christmas day—just as the old dear had related it; this is the way—(almost)—that I gave it:

The old Colonel sat at the foot of his table and glanced across the silver and the crystal at the vacant place at its head. But the Colonel had eaten many Christmas dinners in this lonely state, and today as he carved the prodigious turkey he only smiled with soft resignation at the chair that his young wife had left untenanted nearly nineteen years before. At his elbow old Charlotte stood ready to anticipate the Colonel's slightest wish, and just now as he transferred a slice of the turkey's delicate meat to his own plate the old black woman suddenly laughed aloud; then as he turned his fine white head with slow inquiry she *almost* blushed with apology.

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“ ’Scuse me, Colonel, ’scuse me, but I never sees you cyarve a turkey ’thout bein’ recommended o’ the fust time you ever come to see Miss Dulcie. Does you ’member we had turkey f’r dinner that day?”

“I should say I do, Charlotte. I was asked to cyarve, and I was so conscious of her eyes upon my fingers that I nearly sent the big bird flying into the air.”

“He sholy wuz a slippery bird, Colonel, but I reckon you never did know how near you did come to losin’ dat fowl dat day.”

“How was that, Charlotte?”

“I dunno as I ought t’ tell you, Colonel, but I spec Miss Dulcie’d tell you herse’f ef she wuz here today.”

“If she were here today,” the old Colonel echoed, scarcely knowing he was speaking, and the old black woman went on to tell her story.

“You ’member hit wuz in Naw Leens” (New Orleans) “de fust time you ebber met Miss Dulcie; de time her Unc’ Bob an’ her Aunt Dora tuk her down to see dat Muddy Glaw.”

“Mardi Gras—yes.”

“You was already well acquainted wid her Unc’ Bob—bein’ as how you an’ he done fit in th’ war togedder. . . . As soon as you’s made

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acquainted wid Miss Dulcie you don fell in lob wid her—you couldn't er ho'p it, Colonel, an' she ez sweet ez a rose in her twentyeth year. You fell in lob wid her first sight, an' fo' dat Muddy Glaw's ober you done tole her so, too."

"Yes—on a balcony, with the old F'rench city frolicking below us. That was a happy time."

"I spec so, Colonel. I spec so. . . . You axed her Unc' Bob fer her right away, bein' as how she didn't have no pa—her ma—Miss' Mary—bein a po' widder lady. An' her Unc' Bob an' her Aunt Dora was mo'n willin', an' Miss Dulcie come home wid de ring on 'er finger, an' 'er eyes brighter'n de ring. . . . But a month atter dat you wrote you'se comin' to see her, an' to ax her ma f'r her right an' proper. . . . Lord! I won't nebber forgit dem days. De war done left us all po' as Job's turkey, an' Miss Dulcie's widder-ma po'rer than anybody. But when you writ you was comin' we scrummaged 'round an' got hold er a fine turkey, an' made a cake, an' kilt de last old Dominicker rooster de day befo' to have a fine chick'n-pie. You wuz to git to our town on Sunday mornin', an' Miss Dulcie spected you to come a-callin' to her house as soon as you 'rived an' stay to dinner. I dunno how de mistake come to happen, Colonel, but

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you wuz a-laborin' under the repression dat Miss Dulcie would be goin' ter de church-house f'r de mornin' service, so you dresses at de hotel an' goes to de church, spectin' ter meet her dar, an' wa'k home wid her fer de dinin'.

"But when you gits ter de sarvice an' looks roun', *no Miss Dulcie*—Miss Dulcie all de time dressed in her pink Nun's Veilin', a-settin' at home waitin' fer you to come dar; Miss Mary an' me in de kitchen jes' a-pokin' wood in de stobe, an' a-watchin' dat turkey gittin' *juicier* an' *juicier*, an' de grabby bubblin' up out'n dat chick'n-pie lak water out'n a spring. . . . De cake an' ambrozy a-settin' on de side-board, an' de room smellin' all ober uv narcisses an' vi'-lets. . . . But you wuz all de time waitin' up in de church-house wonderin' whut you gwine do, an' how you gwine to git to Miss Dulcie's *dat* time o' day, hit bein' mos' dinner-time an' you not knowin' fer sho whether you wuz expected er not.

"Well, Mr. Bob's sister wuz at church that day, an' she, (not knowin' nuffin 'bout dat turkey up at our house) she axes you ter go out ter Mr. Bob's fer dinner, an' you says 'thank you,' kase you didn't know whut else ter say, I reckon. Mr. Bob he lives 'bout a mile ter de

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odder end o' de town, an' you goes a-walkin' long wid Mr. Bob's sister out t' Mr. Bob's an' Miss Dora's house.

"Well, Miss Dulcie's little sisters wuz at church, an' when dey seed *dat* dey jes' come flyin' home:

"'Oh, Dulcie—Dulcie—whut you tink? Yo' sweet 'eart wuz at church an' he done gone *out t' Unc' Bob's fer dinner.*'

"'Wid dat Miss Mary frowed up 'er hands, an' turn pale ez a ghost; 'An' Sis, Dora ain't got *no* sort o' dinner,' she gasps. 'She gibbed me 'er last turkey—an' dar he lies a-roastin' now; an' my fine chick'n-pie what's fittin' f'r Gen'al Lee heself to eat! All gwine t' be wasted! . . . Here, Charlotte, here, chillun, I tell you whut we'll do: we'll jes' wrap dese fings up well, an' you'-all go a-flyin' out t' Sis' Dora's wid dis dinner fas' ez yo' laigs kin carry you.'

"'I tuk de turkey, Miss Bessie tuk de chick'n-pie, an' de res' uv 'em tuk de odder fings—we wraps 'em up in tisshu paper, an' we *starts in a persession* fur Miss Dora's. . . . But Colonel, you an' Mr. Bob's sister done got out dar long time ago, an' when Miss Dora seed you comin' she mos' faint.

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“ ‘Lor’! yonder come de Colonel *here*, an’ I ain’t got *no kind o’ dinner* an’ Sis’ Mary she got turkey an’ ambrozy an’ *all* up to her house.’ So she comes down lak a gran’ princess, an’ she say:

“ ‘Oh, Colonel, dis will neber do! Dulcie’ll be jes’ too disapp’inted. She wuz so sot on havin’ you to dinner wid her today. I does wish we could keep you, but you mus’ jes’ turn round an’ go right up dar.’

“ ‘Den you an’ Mr. Bob’s sister turns roun’ an’ starts back fer Miss Mary’s. But you hadn’t mor’n got started when *de persession wid de dinner winds in sight*. . . . Well, when we seed you leavin’ Miss Dora’s, an’ us makin’ fer thare wid de dinner *we* mos’ faints! Miss Bessie sot her chick’n-pie down on de side-walk, an’ runned ‘cross an’ pulled Mr. Bob’s sister down by de coat-tail, an’ whispered, ‘Go back—go back to Aunt Dora’s: *we got de dinner! we got de dinner!*’ But Mr. Bob’s sister knowin’ she couldn’t make no yearthly excuse ter turn back, she marches you right straight on up ter Miss Mary’s.

“ ‘Well, when Miss Dulcie an’ her ma see you comin’ up de front walk—dey mos’ faints deyselbes. . . . *De dinner wuz gone*—and de

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wust uv hit wuz, Colonel, dar wasn't nothin' lef' in dat house but some leetle ole stringy sweet p'tatoes an' a chunk o' bacon so fat 'twa'n't fitten f'r nothin' but ter make soap-grease out of—war done lef' us po' ez po' white trash, but jes' ez proud ez when we had cake to feed to the pigs. . . .

“Well, Miss Mary turned white ez 'er collar, an' Miss Dulcie turned pink ez 'er dress, an' you come in—*han'some!* Unck-oo! de gals sho' did look back at you dat day.

“Po' Miss Mary! She jes' sot down in de kitchen an' cried.

“De fire wuz done out, but she kindle hit up. She sliced some o' dat fat bacon, an' put some o' dem po' leetle taters in ter bake, an' all de time she kep' sayin' ter herself, ‘Oh, dis makes me so mortrified I feel lak I could die! De idea o' settin' Dulcie's *financier* down t' a dinner lak dis!’

“Hit wuz gwine on t' free o'clock, an' dat bacon was tryin' t' crisp up, an' dem leetle taters wuz gettin' saft, when she look out de kitchen winder, an' ef she didn't *see de percession windin' in sight!*—(Miss Dora done turned us back soon ez we get to her house.)

“‘Bress Gawd!’ cried Miss Mary, frowin' up

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her hands. 'Bress Gawd, *yonder comes de dinner back.*'

"We slips in de back way, an' I hustles dat bird on de table,—jes' ez juicy ez ef he hadn't trabled a couple o' miles since he wuz roasted. Den I goes into de dinin'-room an' say:

" 'Ladies an' gent'men, dinner am sarved.'

"An' you an' Miss Dulcie come walkin' down de long hall lookin' lak a queen an' king to-gedder, only she wuz right pale thinkin' o' dat fat bacon, an' dem leetle taters she 'spected t' see on de table. But when she got to de do' an' seed dat turkey lyin' so innocent-like on de big white turkey dish *she mos' faints.*

" 'Colonel,' said Miss Mary, 'will you do us de honors, an' cyarve de fowl!'

"An' I mos' bus' out laughin' when I seed you stick dat fork deep into dat turkey's breas' much ez to say '*I got you fas' dis time!*'

"I ain't neber seed you cyarve a fowl sence, Colonel, without bein' recomminded o' de first time you ebber come ter see Miss Dulcie."

December Eleventh

I'm almost too overcome (as Mammy says) to write: yet I must tell of the biggest surprise, so far, of my visit—but no anti-climax, if you please!

On Monday, mind you, Aunt John announced to me that she intended giving Mrs. Eugenia Deepheart, author of "War-Widows," the startling new play of the season, a reception on Wednesday (last) night. The playwright is a suffragist, feminist, and all-round revolutionist such as my Aunt deeply approves of.

It was to be an affair nonpareil—also non-apparel—I understood, and i (I write this i purposely, and with modesty aforethought, as typifying the kind of i I am in my Aunt's household), i was informed by my stepaunt that i was to be placed at the punch bowl *under the stairs!* She spoke as if I were a little wooden pawn that she had moved on her great chess-board.

"It is a very inconspicuous place; your gown will not be noticed there, if you are careful to stand behind the bowl." Gee! but she does

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over-season her humble pie, and if you are a Culpepper from Mississippi, and consequently not used to that kind of pastry, it does blister your spiritual tongue. However I only murmured, "Thanks—I'll be very careful! I'll have Mammy re-press my organdy."

That was at the breakfast table. Aunt John was called to the 'phone at that minute by Mrs. Vanderwand—nobody else would have gotten an interview while the grapefruit waited. The minute she was out of the room Uncle John whispered to me:

"Drop by the Bank, Dulcie, this morning—S—h!"

At eleven o'clock Aunt John went out with Mrs. Vanderwand and I slipped down to Uncle John's bank. His face shone like a china door-knob after a hard session of bon-ami and elbow-grease: I reiterate there is absolutely nothing the matter with Uncle John but that he is a moral coward. I'll bet his anti-slavery sentiments were merely a concession to the feelings about him—some of it may have been physical cowardice, it is true.

He came to the point quickly. He got out a roll of bills and said as hurriedly as if he expected Aunt John to swoop down upon us at

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any minute, that as I hadn't spent my nineteenth birthday with him, he hadn't yet given me my birthday present—and there it was—a little packet of sixty dollars: I was to go at once and buy me something pretty to wear to the War-Widows' reception: now, that man would have made a model slave-owner—without Aunt John.

With a bounding pulse I left that shiny black-and-white bank, and ran out into the shiny winter weather, to find the most opalescent shop-window I could recall. Its array of taffetas, silver lace, and tulles was fascinating—with that crackly wad in my hand-bag.

Most of the marvelous gowns were above my means, but there were lots of heavenly things to be had for fifty dollars, leaving ten for slippers and stockings. Just as I had about decided on a frappé kind of gown—all flounces and flounces of mint-green tulle embroidered in silver—Dad's silvery head grew right out of those glistening mists, just as a "vision" does in a picture-play. His tired eyes blotted out the twinkle of those rhinestone flowers: his old greeny-black coat took the color out of that foolish tulle. His coarse darned socks lay where the girl had just placed a pair of silken hose.

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"W-a-i-t—wait!" I heard myself cry out. "I can't spend all that money to hand a War-Widow author a cup of punch from a secluded spot under the stairs. Why, that would buy a real war-hero a new coat, and collars, and linen handkerchiefs, and an oyster dinner at the Cotton-Blossom Café—wait—wait! I won't take any gown just yet, thank you." . . . Like a bird-man with a broken biplane I dropped back to the ground floor and for a minute stood dazed and aimless in the ninety-eight-cent region that reigned below. Then I recalled Uncle John's reason for making me this gift. I must get something new for the reception; it would be taking money under false pretenses if I didn't. My brain was still full of the knowing creations I had seen upstairs; especially did it keep the picture of the one the saleslady had said was the newest of them all. It had offered little more than a few lengths of wonderful stuff draped into wearable form—as if a whirlwind had thrown in at the figure, and it had caught in the most ravishing folds. My eyes fell on a center counter near by, and straight upon a piece of goods that ravished, while it filled me with a great peace. It was a heavy silk: a rich peacock blue—oh, a fascinating color! brocaded

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richly, yet chastely, with a design of peacock feathers in silver and copper and gold. A wonderful thing, overlooked by the ordinary buyer and left for the eyes of artistry only. For that reason it had been reduced to ninety-eight cents a yard! I recognized the hand of destiny. A startling idea visualized before me. . . . White organdy indeed! If Dulcie Culpepper from darkest Mississippi didn't appear before her Aunt John's guests the next evening the most sophisticated young woman in New York she'd agree to eat every yard of that metallized peacock silk. . . . I breathlessly demanded ten yards—only \$9.80—think! I got a lot of bronzy beads: then pins—a new paper—then I whizzed home, my brain full of pricking energy.

I got Mammy upstairs—little Mammy, just a bit above my height and slender as a brown reed—and stripped her to her fresh, white chemise; she has always stuck to her chemises. I put my best under-slip on her, and lo! my dummy. I threw my gorgeous silk at her, and it clung ravishingly. I draped it over one brown shoulder, leaving the other bare—I'd lay a few strands of beads over that—that's all. I wound the brocade softly round the waist, and swathed the limbs diagonally, leaving a

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little wicked tail spreading out upon the floor. Then I pinned it all in place: even Mammy looked an houri in it! Then I sent her down to make herself a cup of tea while I replaced the pins with stout tackings of green and blue silk thread.

It was a lovely thing when I put it on the next night. It brought coppery gleams out of my hair, which I wore heaped up very high, stuck all over with little curls, and with two real peacock feathers thrust at wicked angles through the knot. I had some coppery-gold slippers, and silk stockings of that Burne-Jones' shade of blue. At my waist I wore some dull flame-colored orchids I had selected when Clarence begged to know what kind of flowers to send me. When I was fully dressed (or undressed) I stood off and chuckled at myself—and my reflection chuckled back at me. Unsophisticated! If ever I saw a naughty magazine-back picture-lady galvanized into a living young woman I was that knowing young She. You couldn't tell where my gown began and ended. The way that peacock tail wiggled-waggled as I "lithed" about the room was distracting, even to me, its creator. Inconspicuous! You would have looked at me anywhere

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in New York—and *I didn't care!* I was going to put one over Aunt John with her retired punch bowl idea.

Just before I dressed I ran out and mailed Dad forty-eight good, Uncle John dollars—and I stipulated that he should eat half a dozen raw, and a dozen fried, at the Cotton-Blossom Café.

When the guests were beginning to arrive thick and fast I lithed down the wide staircase—Oh, I Theda-Bara'd, I can tell you! Secluded spot under the stairs! I saw nearly everybody below stand still and stare up as I slowly “willowed” down, Mumsey's lovely old peacock-fan in my hand.

Aunt John, receiving next to the celebrity, followed the eyes of the crowd. Hers gaped as they fell on me. It was a blissful moment. I moved slowly back to my secluded position but it got conspicuous all at once. A big crowd all of a sudden got thirsty. It was very pretty punch, and I stood in the tinted light from my Aunt's overhanging art-glass lanterns as I filled cup after cup, and gave a smile with every cup. Mrs. Eugenia Deepheart had a respectable showing of club and other purposeful women about her for the next forty minutes, but if there was a single black-coat interested in War-

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Widows I couldn't miss him from my little tea-party.

Aunt John finally led the author to the other punch bowl, "*conspicuous*" in the library, and presided over by Miss Bubbles, sister to the Professor, and a poet of the verse-libertine school. Then she came back to me. Her eyes looked exactly like snapping-beetles sound. . . . *Secluded spot under the staircase!* . . . "Kiss me, my fool!"

"Where *did* you get that gown, Dulcie? Everybody in the house is talking about you." She said it low, pretending to be asking how the punch was holding out.

"W-h-y—what are they saying, Aunt John?" I asked innocently.

"It's unconventional—and it's not good taste for so young a girl. It's outrageously—conspicuous."

"One must do something if one is assigned—to—the—secluded—spot—under—the stairs," I answered deliberately, and turned to some new people who had come for punch.

At that minute Orrin arrived—but that's too long a story—and too big a one—for this writing; I'll have to leave that for my next entry. . . . I must dress now.

Twelfth

Orrin was arriving when I cut off yesterday. It was late—'way after eleven, and the guests were slightly thinning. Mrs. Deepheart was holding a little court in the drawing-room, to which Aunt John had fairly dragged the men. I was sitting—a little tired—for a minute, behind the punch bowl, when I saw Orrin in the hall up front. He was smiling guard over the back of a blonde head—beautifully, but simply, dressed. I knew the blonde girl was Dawn Fairfield, the actress. I had already heard that Orrin was going to bring her to the reception after the theater. I rose, the better to see her. She was dressed in white—exquisitely, but girlishly—no vampire suggestions about Dawn Fairfield! Orrin was presenting her around, and people were making much of her. His strong, handsome face was toward me, and it was radiant. I gripped my punch ladle: Clarence and Professor Bubbles looked like two stuffed rag dolls beside him. I felt a great heave of emptiness in my left side just over those baleful-colored orchids. I could have

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batted Clarence with the cut-glass ladle when he leaned over the bowl and said something sticky to me. I wanted to spill punch down Professor Bubbles' too-large collar—but instead, I smiled; I assure you I've had a lot of experience in smiling when I'd rather have gone ahead and ached all over my face. I've smiled when taxes were due: when the roof leaked on my only hat: when the flour barrel showed its bottom, and when the new calf proved a little bull. I smiled now as I saw Orrin look down the hall towards the turn in the stairs—and I waved my hand at him. He smiled back: how splendid a thing is a real man's great, honest, cosmic smile! I thrilled all down my spine, though I knew he was happy only because he was going to bring Dawn Fairfield back for me to see her. I gave the punch a stir so it would be fine and fruity for Orrin's sweetheart.—I hope I am not little. I lost sight of her as they turned—she is not tall, but I could still follow Orrin steering her my way. I never caught her face, however, until she was just opposite me. I had filled a cup from the coldest corner, taking care to get in a chunk of pineapple and two cherries, when Orrin said, towering above the bowl:

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“Dawn, I wish you to meet our little house-guest—a kind of cousin of mine.” I leaned out, cup poised sort of Hebe-like in my lifted hand, and an undaunted smile on my lips, and looked straight into the face of *Ann Lamar!*

I pause at this critical dramatic moment to explain all about Ann Lamar, or posterity—for whom I am making these intimate confessions—never will understand what that moment meant to Ann, or Dawn, I suppose I should say.

When Cousin Cassius Lamar married a girl in Memphis, whom none of us had ever known or seen, the houses of Lamar and Culpepper in Mississippi received a pretty heavy slap of surprise. We all agreed, when we saw her, that Ann, the unknown wife, was beautiful, and it was quite plain that slow, retiring, good, thirty-odd Cousin Cass adored her. But as the months and years went by we all—without so many words—agreed that Cousin Cass’ marriage was not all it should be. Ann had grown more beautiful—with her corn-silk hair, her rose-pink cheeks, and her turquoise eyes—but Ann was not like any of the Lamars or Culpeppers. Small-town life bored her to extinction. She spent half her time, and all Cousin

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Cass' money, visiting her old home, Memphis. She had had stage intentions before her marriage: she never tired of telling us of the great career she had foregone to enter our family. Even the two divine babies that came—Valentine, and then the dark-eyed Dolores (she named them) did not satisfy her.

Lapping off extraneous matter, five years ago Ann ran away. A little cheap repertoire company had been playing Brookhaven for a week. . . . The leading man *was* good looking—we school-girls were daffy about him—and he was rather clever. Ann went every night, and to matinées. The company disbanded at the end of the week—and Ann left with the leading man. Left Cousin Cass and little Val and Dolores, taking as much money as she could get her hands on. Poor Cousin Cassius traced them, after so long a time, to California—San Francisco. They were playing in stock together, and passing as man and wife. Before Cousin Cassius could get there they had evidently gotten wind of his coming, thrown up the engagement and flown. About a year ago Cousin Cass had divorce papers served on him from New York. He had no money to come—and none of the family would give him any for

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that purpose—everybody thought it would be the best thing if she got it. That was a year ago, and night before last, in this house, I stood facing her; once Ann Lamar, now Dawn Fairfield, ingénue of one of the leading companies on Broadway! Now don't say again that coincidence never uses that long arm in real life.

I caught full sight of Ann's (or Dawn's) face before she saw mine. She was smiling: I still smiled. I was holding on to the punch. She brought her eyes down from Orrin's, and looked into mine. . . . Then Ann went white about the lips. Those round blue eyes flickered like a candle flame when you blow upon it.

"Miss Fairfield," Orrin said, "let me present Miss Culpepper of Mississippi—*Miss Dulcie from Dixie*," he added in sheer happiness. . . . Then Ann's eyes began to glitter like an animal's brought to bay: one that shows fight—a disposition to bite hard to tear in its desperate resolve to do some hurt before it dies. Her lips moved: they slightly snarled. She was about to speak when I shot her a look as I put the level punch cup—not a cherry had splashed over—into her fingers. It was a swift, compelling glance that not even Orrin had caught.

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"Miss Fairfield," I said distinctly, "I am so happy to meet you: have punch? It's rather good, I think, though I, myself, prefer mint julep." I couldn't think of anything else to rattle off shallowly. In polite society, you know, tragic moments require light comedy treatment.

Ann-Dawn covered her twitching lips with her cup, and I tickled Orrin under the chin with one of the peacock feathers in my hair.

"I don't think I mentioned Miss Culpepper to you: she's a niece of my stepfather's." I think Orrin felt grateful for my levity, for wasn't it kind of queer he hadn't mentioned that they had a house-guest? But maybe not. I am so insignificant to Orrin. "She's going to be with us for some time."

Ann-Dawn, who for all her thirty-odd years doesn't look over twenty *usually*, suggested a rather gray and wintry Aurora when she lowered her punch cup. Her cheeks were still pink—you'd never have suspected her of rouging if the natural color hadn't so suddenly gone out of the rest of her face, and left her cheeks as hectic as her name.

"Y-e-s?" she gasped, choking on that chunk of pineapple.

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"Take another cup—quick!" I rushed one to her. "Swallow hard! Pineapple is *so* uncomfortable in the windpipe."

She washed it down, gratefully, I am convinced. Then all, and more of her color flooded back, and she looked the most fiery Dawn, or the reddest Ann, you ever saw. I turned to Professor Bubbles, still floating around me, and re-opened an interesting subject he had broached early in the evening—of which more anon, as the mid-Victorian novelist used to say.

I don't think Dawn had a very victorious evening, after all: I had already found out that she had counted on a social, as well as professional, triumph at her future mother-in-law's that night. Tinie, who has the worst case of slip-tomania I ever saw—she slips about and finds out every living and half-born secret of the family, and then tells it to Mammy, who seals it up in that flat brown bosom of hers and lets it out only to her "baby-chile." Well, Tinie had overheard the stormy scene between Orrin and his mother in which he had demanded an invitation for Ann-Dawn, she had asked it of him, and he got it by declaring he would not appear at the reception if Aunt John refused to invite his actress sweetheart. So mother

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had been coerced into sending the invitation, and Ann-Dawn had met Nemesis in a peacock-blue gown behind a punch bowl in a secluded spot under the stairs of her lover's mother's home. Doesn't old Mam' Fate hand you out a parcel sometime when you get too greedy?

December Thirteenth

Little old New York!

I bumped straight into Mr. Bindmann as I was furiously walking off a home-ache this afternoon on Broadway. Met him just as naturally as I ever met Jim Smith on Main Street in Brookhaven, Mississippi. He started to scold me because I have not been to call on him. It sounded almost like one of Dad's scoldings, and something hot and hurty stung my eyes. Mr. Bindmann turned quickly and tucked my hand up under his arm:

"I can kidnap you, anyway," he said, and he bore me right along through the stream of people, a couple of blocks to his theater. Matinée was just over and the house emptying, so he took me up behind the scenes. I was so excited I forgot all about my homesickness.

It was fascinating: just like dissecting a great body; I saw the vast ribs and arteries and heart of the theater laid open before me. Most thrilling of all, Mr. Bindmann took me to the star's dressing-room. She had just gotten back into her street clothes. She is a beautiful

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woman, and when she learned that I was from the South she turned with all her soul in her great dark eyes and asked:

“How *do* you cook yams so they will candy? Mine never will.” Wasn’t it homey and peopley? I told her I was going to have Dad send her some real sweet potatoes from Arden—and I’ve just written him to express her a few bushels.

Then her little boy, seven years old, came to go home with her, and she gave me an autographed photograph of herself. Mr. Bindmann and I went out to look about at more of the wonders of that mysterious region “behind the curtain.”

I’m going to *matinée* Saturday—Aunt or no Aunt John.

December Fourteenth
10 P. M.

If Ann-Dawn thought that retributive incident closed over Aunt John's punch bowl she was sadly mistaken. As soon as Aunt John was off to one of her clubs this afternoon Nemesis set forth.

Dawn was playing in their usual matinée performance. I didn't go in to see her make-believe to be a sweet young thing of ingenious innocence—I didn't care to waste my money.

My tour with Mr. Bindmann of the mysterious regions behind the scenes had put me wise, so I repaired to the stage entrance and sent my card in to Miss Fairfield. I received word that I was to walk right into the ingénue's dressing-room—of course she couldn't ignore me.

She sent her maid out, then turned on me, the glare of fight again in her eyes:

"Hello, Ann," I said nonchalantly, closing the door with one hand behind me, not taking my eyes off her.

"What do you want?" came from between her little white teeth.

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"Oh—nothing. Just dropped in to see you and say howdy-do, and ask how you like New York. Pleasant change from the monotony of Brookhaven, Mississippi, isn't it? Like acting better than housekeeping and baby-raising, Ann?"

Her hand went to one of heavy cut-glass scent bottles on her dressing-table, and her eyes shot blue sparks.

"You—little—hussy!" she muttered. "I knew you would blab."

"I am not!" I refuted deliberately. "And I never tattled in my life. What good would it do for Cousin Cass to find you, anyway?"

"That's it," she grasped at my words. "He couldn't get me back."

"And Lord knows what he'd want with you, if he could. But you can't tell—men are so funny. Anyway, I shouldn't want him to get you back."

"Well—you are a nervy one!" she exclaimed. "But all the—er—Mississippi Culpeppers are that."

"It takes nerve to hold one's tongue sometimes," I retorted. "You'd better be glad I *am* nervy, Ann."

"You're really not going to tell? You're not

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going to write—them—in Mississippi, and put—them on my track?”

“I am not!”

“But of course you’re going to tell—up yonder at—your Uncle’s house?”

“No, I’m not going to tell Uncle John, nor Aunt John.”

“B-u-t——” her face flamed, and her eyes flared more bluely. “Orrin? Of course you are going to—to——”

“Put him on his guard!” I answered cold-bloodedly. “N—o, I’m not going to do even that. ’Twouldn’t do any good. ’Twouldn’t do any good to tell Orrin: he’d take you in spite of everything, as long as he’s madly in love with you. Men are that way.”

“You know a lot about men,” she suddenly sneered. I knew that Ann Lamar knew that I had never known any men but the unsophisticated boys of Brookhaven, but I wasn’t pleased.

“My mother was a belle: my grandmother was a—a—toast. All the women-folks in my family have had men-lore at their tongue-tips. . . . I inherit it. It’s prenatal knowledge. . . . Well, I’m going now.”

“What did you want, then, by tracking me down?”

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"I just wanted to be sure that Dawn Fairfield is Ann Lamar, that's all."

"I—I—thank you for your promise to—keep—quiet about what is really none of your affair," she said, with some show of gratitude.

"Don't mention it! And don't be too lavish of your gratitude. I haven't said, you know, that I'm going to help you out in your plans and purposes." I sent this pretty pointedly back at her as I put my hand on her door-knob.

"Wait——" she called, nature for the minute showing up in her. "You mustn't go without telling me—something—about—the children." She choked. "You ought to tell me a little about them."

"They are lovely—both of them." I couldn't be inhuman. "And healthy, and good, and so sweet!"

She only moved her head up and down—I knew she could not speak. At last she broke out in a burst of self-justification.

"You must see now that I was right in—giving up everything for my career. Genius will have its way! Nothing can or ought to stop it. You see what a success I've made in my art. Suppose I'd never broken loose? How could I, with my talents and temperament, bury myself

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in that dead little hole in Mississippi? You must see now that I was justified in—in——”

“Running away from your husband with a strolling actor: abandoning your little children: breaking the laws of God and society—if you feel sure your career has justified all that, Ann, you don’t need any assurances from a little old-fashioned country girl like me.” I went out and shut the door behind me.

I come thinking hard; I thought hard all during dinner. I have never seen Orrin look so fine and strong as he did tonight. Why do women like her always take in splendid men? It seems to me an awful sacrifice of so much masculine excellence to think of Orrin marrying Ann Lamar, believing her to be good and true and innocent. I felt a big pity for him surge up and swamp all the inside of me: and all the time I knew no word of mine could save him: better let him go to his fate blindly than to let him know and then see him go on, as undoubtedly he would, infatuated as he is with Ann.

But is it my duty to let him go on? Isn’t it my clear fate-appointed place to stop him in some way other than by telling on Ann? That is what absorbed me all during dinner. That’s what has been running through my brain all

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evening. That's the question old subconsciousness keeps asking me during all my top conversation. . . . Well, it's up to old "sub" now to suggest ways and means of saving Orrin from the unholy clutches of Ann-Dawn Lamar-Fairfield.

December Fifteenth

I told everything to Mammy this morning: she does not reciprocate Tinie's confidences. Mammy is a little human Sphinx—Niggers are that way. You couldn't pry a secret concerning one of their own race out of any one of them, and you couldn't torture a Culpepper secret out of Mammy.

"The only way to get a man *out* of love with a woman, Mammy, is to get him *in* love with another one." I sat up cross-legged in bed as I delivered this oracular conclusion of a long night's thoughts.

"You knows all 'bout mens in lob, don' you, honey?" Mammy took my tray away and put it on a table. "But you ought to: yo' Mammy sho' had 'em all makin' up to her—an' all yo' aunties, too. You inherits all dem little know-in's f'm yo' ascendants, I reckon, honey."

"Just exactly what I told Ann-Dawn yesterday. . . . And, Mammy," I continued after I'd finished taking a look through the thin cream curtains that hang between the folds of rose-splashed cretonne, at my windows, "it's better

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for a man to be thrown over than taken in, any time. . . . If I could only get Orrin Castleton to fall in love with *me!*”

“You wouldn’t have dat *Yankee*, would you, baby?” Mammy gasped in horrified apprehension.

“Have him? Not on your dear old dark tin-type! Who said anything about having him? But if I could only make him fall in love with me, you see, he’d get over that infatuation for Ann-Dawn, and when he was completely saved from that danger I’d throw him over, you see, and then he’d land sane and level-headed on his feet.”

“Fro’ him ober?” Mammy immediately flew to the side of the defenseless. “Now, he hain’t done nuffin’ ’g’inst you, honey. He mought-a been a rat good sort o’ gemman ef he’d a-happened to a-been born down Souf—an’ we don’t none uv us have no chosin’ ’bout bein’ borned, you know.”

“It’s because he is decent, and because—well, because:” I finished, logically. “Even if his mother is an old iceberg with flitters on her I’d hate to see her son taken in in such an outrageous way, and I’m going to try, Mammy: it’ll help pass the time away—the time I’ve got

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to be exiled from Dixie and Dad—wait; I ain't goin' to cry this time—don't get the towel. I've got too big a business in mind. Let's look the situation over. 'Desperate ills need desperate remedies,' " I quoted dramatically, throwing off the covers, and striding about my rosy little room. "He's never noticed me yet—really and truly noticed me. . . . He must *see* me! . . . He must be *made* to see me! His attention must be arrested by something concerning me. . . . What's my best asset, Mammy?"

"What's an asset, honey? Anything like a gusset? We ust to put gussets in to mek our dresses bigger, er prettier."

"Assets are women's natural gussets, Mammy. Things put in to make them seem bigger and better-looking."

"You sho' is one smart little thing, baby! Looks lak dis Norven air sort-o ripened you—lak a touch o' frost does de p'simmons down home."

"That's it, Mammy—that's it! I was a pretty green persimmon when I first came; well, I've got to ripen, and ripen quick, Mammy. I need to be the most tempting bit of a persimmon that ever lured a man-kid to climb up out of the way of the snake in the grass at the foot

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of the tree. . . . Oh, I may pucker his mouth a little when he gets to me—but he'll have escaped the poisonous snake, anyway. . . . Now, as to my assets—which are my best points?"

"Points? You ain't got no points: you'se all rounds: little rounds—'cept yo' chin do run to a sort-o sof' little point. . . . Yo' little arms am round, an' yo' little laigs am round." I blushed—I know when I blush because I feel hot on my cheeks.

"I mean my best available feature. You've got to get a man to notice something unusual about you. Here—look me over in a business way—no foolishness. How shall I get Orrin Castleton to look at me with really seeing eyes? My hair?" I shook it loose. "My eyes?" I stretched them. "Or my hands? Here, help me look myself over."

I stood still in my low-necked and short-sleeved nightie and Mammy looked me up and down. She began with my head and went down slowly. As she got to the lowest inch of me she said with the quiet wisdom of the Witch of Endor:

"Yo' little *foots* am de pretties' fings 'bout you—yo' little bare foots."

"And nobody has used feet," I cried in my

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inspiration. "It's a brand-new idea. I never heard of Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba using bare feet. Surely he'll look at them."

I had never felt any undue pride in the fact that my feet are just as Nature made them, until that minute: then I looked over my cornless, untrammeled toes and was glad of them. I had Mammy manicure my toe-nails immediately—I intend having it done every day till I find an opportunity to use them—oh, sinister and secret Miss Machiavelli!

P. S.—

I can't meet him in the halls barefoot. I can't get up a burglar scare. I'm afraid I can't learn a classic dance—that would be too sophisticated, anyway, and he might think my dancers were "made up." Old subconsciousness will have to come to my aid again. I've got the feet, but how to get them into his vision, naked and unashamed? If I continue to lose sleep over Orrin and Ann Lamar I'll go off in my looks, and then where'll my chances be?

Professor Bubbles has asked me to come up to Castle Heights and give an afternoon of negro stories—think of that! He considers them highly educational as well as pleasing, and won't I also sing for the young ladies? Do

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I know any plantation songs? Do I? Mammy's whole repertoire, and Yellow Lize's, and all the droll, fascinating things—sacred and secular—the men and women sing in the fields. I accepted his invitation, and I've sent home for my guitar—the one that was my Aunt Lucy's, who died young—and all her old music. I'm going to give those Yankee girls up on the Hudson a real "Way down South in Dixie" program.

Oh, but if I could only think of a way to get my feet in Orrin's eyes!

December Twenty-second

“ ’Tis done!” as we used to sing in Sunday School. “The great transaction’s done!”

I’m lying in bed with the shades lowered and a bottle of violet water on the stand beside me. Also roses, yard-stemmed roses, with long buds, in all my vases. . . . Isn’t it heavenly to be in bed with a sprained ankle—that isn’t sprained.

After all my worry it went off splendidly.

Aunt and Uncle John went to a sacred musicale yesterday (Sunday) afternoon. I hadn’t been included in the invitation. Mrs. Vanderwand was going and was going to take Clarence. Miss Bubbles had insisted on her notable brother accompanying her. Orrin, of course, hadn’t been provided for; some awful Bohemian orgy on for him, according to Aunt John’s fancy.

But it happened that a half hour after the heads of the house had departed Mammy came up to me quite breathless. Orrin was at home: sitting as peaceful and unsuspecting as the proverbial lamb, with a book in the library below:

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she had peeked at him through a crack in the door.

A shiver, like that I am sure ran down the spine of Lady Macbeth when Duncan came to spend the night at Inverness, played a tremolo down my back-bone. The moment had come! I had already had my daily pedicure, so I at once ordered out my bronze stockings and slippers: those outrageous little heels would account for anything.

As I descended the stairs the elation of a great purpose seized me. I was thrilled, for the self-sacrificing exaltation of a Lady Godiva possessed me. I went singing up the hall. Now, everybody knows I never would have sung in Aunt John's hall if I had dreamed any of the family were in!

Just as I got to the library door I tripped on one of Aunt John's fady old hundred dollar rugs—oh, those murderous high heels! I came down with a self-immolating thud; o—h! I did bump. I am not practiced in stage-craft. Ann-Dawn, now, might have fallen without so much as getting a jar; but I defy Ann-Dawn, herself, to put up a more realistic groan than that which followed my fall. I heard a book slam to the floor in the library. Orrin came

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rushing out. I lay tangled in a heap in the prayer-rug.

“O—h—oh—oh!” I moaned, still taking Lady Macbeth for my model.

“Have you hurt yourself?” Orrin was down over the tangle. “Did you trip? Where is it? Let me help you.”

“My a-n-k-l-e!” I groaned. “Oh—my—ankle!”

The pain became almost real. I believe it was Delsarte who taught that principle.

“Which one—dear?”

Ye Gods! how that did sound. It sort of soothed me deep down, as if I had had a pain there for a long time.

“The—er——” which was the prettiest foot? Quick—which *was* the prettiest? “The—er—l-e-f-t! O—h!”

“Let me put you on the couch. And we must get something done for it. Here, let me lift you.”

He stooped over and slipped an arm under my shoulder and another under my knees.

He lifted me just as the hero does Marguerite Clarke, and carried me into the library, very gently placing me on the couch.

“Did I hurt you? We must get something

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done. Here—let me slip a cushion under it till we can get somebody.” He lifted up the possuming member, and put a sofa pillow under it. “Now—little more comfortable? What a brave little girl!”

“Oh—oh—oh!” I was afraid I had been too brave. “Oh—get my slipper off!” He slipped one off. “My—stocking!” He hesitated. My bronze silken foot lay close to his hand.

“I’ll go for somebody—— Your Mammy—is she upstairs?” He rose. I caught him by the coat, sobbing:

“No—no——! Don’t—d-o-n’t! You’ll scare her to death. Mammy’ll go off into the high-strikes!” Unconsciously I lapsed into the negro term for hysterics. “I’ll—I’ll try, myself—to get it off.” I slipped the stocking down to the ankle as I spoke, while he very apparently turned his head. At the ankle I cried out again and fell back on a pillow. “Oh, it h-u-r-t-s—me so! What will I do? It hurts me so!—I can’t!—won’t you—you——?” I appealed imploringly. He turned and knelt by the couch: gingerly he took hold of the peeled-down stocking top and gave it a little shove.

“Oh—oh!”

“*Did* that hurt you? I’m such a clumsy

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beast! I—never did—anything—like this—before, you see—and—do you push or pull them, please?”

“You—extract them,” I sobbed, to cover my spasm of laughter, but he heard the chuckle through the tears.

“Well, you *are* a plucky little bit!” He tenderly peeled the stocking off my ankle, and then down my instep.

“Slow-ly: slowly,” I cried—to lengthen the situation and strengthen the impression. I raised up. “Oh, is it swollen?” I asked, inspecting it.

“I can’t tell,” he faintly stammered. “It’s such an aristocratic little foot.” He had the stocking off to the toes. “Such a high-bred little instep.”

“Can’t you tell anatomy from swell?” He laughed. “I can detect the swell-*head* when I see it, but one doesn’t have as much experience in—feet—little—bare feet. Am I pulling too hard?”

I don’t know when I’ve enjoyed myself more—in mind or body: one pedal end of it, at least, was having a gay good time. He had gotten to my toes—I knew he had. I let him gaze undisturbed at those shining, shell-colored nails for a

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minute or two: then the situation became too tense even for me.

"Get the arnica," I gasped, putting my face down in the pillow.

"The arnica?" he sprang up as if he had been shot. "I beg pardon! I'll run up to the medicine chest," and he was out of the room. I took occasion to look myself. That brown leather really made quite a becoming background—the foot looked whiter upon it. I heard Orrin coming, and I fell back among the pillows.

"We hadn't a bit of—arnica—wasn't that what you asked for? but here's some antiseptic." He had brought down a green and gold bowl, and some towels. He knelt on the floor. "Now, just put your poor little foot down—or does it hurt too badly? I can hold the basin on my knee."

I slid the supposititiously wounded member into the bowl, and Orrin poured antiseptic over it.

"Now, we must get you upstairs: you've been wonderfully brave." He beamed at me—a *seeing look at last!* I thrilled all through—the glowing stir of triumph ran through me. "I'll help you up."

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"I can—try—to hop," I murmured with fortitude, "if—if—I'm too heavy—for you to carry."

"Too heavy? A little mite of a thing like you too heavy for—me?" He stooped and lifted me in his arms, carrying me laterally. . . . I lay back as comfortable as if I had been in—my own father's arms. As comfortable? I had never had so delicious a resting place in all my nineteen years—and there's no use pretending to myself that I have had. What's more, I never will have again. That's the sorry part of it. While I've been teaching him a thing or two I've learned some lessons myself. . . . I'm afraid I actually cuddled. I couldn't help it. I felt so—well, as if I ought to be there. That's funny! As if I belonged there—belonged in the arms of a Culpepper of New York—that is, a step-Culpepper. I don't doubt that he's stepped into all of Uncle John's feelings against the South: his mother's contempt for most of us who live down there. . . . I felt at peace in the arms of the man I am trying my very hardest to lure away from another woman: the man I am going to throw over if I succeed in getting him into my grasp.

He went up the steps very silently and slowly.

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I could hear his heart beating right under my left ear. I wonder if that man has an abnormal heart? It certainly pounds. When we got to my door he slightly kicked his foot upon it, but Mammy was down in the kitchen. I heard his heart give an extra big bump as he stepped inside with me. It is a sweet room—so pink and flowery! He laid me on my little rose-splashed bed.

“Now, I think I’d better call a doctor at once.”

“No—no—no!” I got unruly at once. “I’ll get up if you do, and walk upon it—and maybe make myself lame for life. . . . I know about sprains. All I need is to lie quiet. . . . Would you mind calling Mammy now—and by and by you may come back and speak to me.” I looked up at him trustfully.

“Indeed I will: I’ll hang around right in call for fear you need me.”

Mammy came up, and got me into my kimono—a very pretty one that Nan Lamar gave me. . . . I powdered my nose and let my hair down. As I got back into bed I gave a faint scream, and Orrin immediately knocked at the door. After a second Mammy opened it, and he peeped in.

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"I feel we ought to do something more—" he pleaded. I murmured, "I'm all right now," which was true.

He stepped in, and made more remarks about my courage—then he gave me another *seeing* look. "What hair!" he murmured. "Such a lovely, unusual color—such quantities—and so long!" He ran his hand down a strand of it. I felt that caress all over me. "So warm—and sweet! . . . I didn't know my little—er—cousin was such a wonderful little body till this afternoon." Umph! His mind and eyes had been too full of Ann! I put out my hand:

"Thank you so much," I murmured cosily. "You were so brave and—strong!" I've noticed that epithet always takes with a man. "Mammy's made tea; won't you take a cup with me?"

We had a gay, comforting time—Mammy right there doing propriety. After that he left—reluctantly—anybody could have seen that.

Mammy had bandaged my foot, Aunt John got home, and I had my dinner in bed. This morning, early, the box of roses—with Orrin's card—arrived. . . . I'm having a delicious day, but I must get down to dinner this evening.

CUT-OFF

Eleven-thirty P. M.

Orrin was waiting in the upstairs sitting-room as I came out at dinner time. Mammy had told him I thought I would be able to come down.

I have the make-believe talent strong enough to have started out on Mammy's arm: I really hadn't thought, though, of his waiting around so near-by. He hurried to us and put himself in Mammy's place.

"You're sure this isn't taking risks—er—Miss Dulcie?" he made the charming compromise between familiarity and formality; a sort of imitation of our Southern way of calling ladies by their first names plus the title; he had thought it quite amusing when I first came to hear Uncle John asking after old ladies he had known and calling them "Miss" Mollie, and "Miss" Mandy.

"You'd be surprised," I answered, gayly—I was feeling so buoyant at that minute—"to see the foot now: not discolored a particle. It must have been the antiseptic and your prompt first-aid."

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"And not swollen?" with real solicitude, looking down on the bronze instep.

"I—don't—think——" I stopped and held on to the stair-rail, placing the right foot on the next higher stair. He stooped and examined it carefully.

"Not much; a tiny bit, I think," and he softly pressed *the wrong ankle!* Then we continued our descent. Aunt John looked unbounded surprise when we entered—she had expected to see me with Mammy. Uncle John beamed. He sprang up, but Aunt John's "J-o-h-n!" sat him back like a Jack-in-the-Box. "Soup?" she continued, firmly, and he finished weakly, "Glad to see you up."

"It was a silly tumble," I returned him a beam. "I hope I didn't hurt your lovely rug, Aunt Electra." I call her by her great name when I can remember.

"I don't see how you could have tripped on it. I never allow a ruck or wrinkle in my rugs."

"I'm not used to such slick floors," I said, truthfully.

"Fortunate thing you were here, Orrin," remarked Uncle John.

"If he had not been here—things would have

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been entirely different." I threw Orrin a look that meant to him what it really did not mean. What a subtle thing is woman, anyhow! Orrin talked a lot during dinner—he talks well: a charming voice, a bright easy way of saying things. I talked some myself. We quite took the conversation out of the elders' hands—our mouths. We talked like two normal young people of opposite sexes getting interested in one another; as we ought to have talked during my first dinner in that house instead of my thirty-first. We talked of plays and books: poetry and people. Aunt John's face was not pleased when, as we rose from the table, he sprang to take my arm again. It became a study when he sat down in the drawing-room with no apparent desire to hurry away. We had gotten to the most interesting topic of all—ourselves: our likes and dislikes, predilections and ideals. Uncle John took up the evening paper: Aunt John had a drama—one of Hauptmann's, I think. I noticed she turned the pages very slowly and I fear she went to bed with a touch of earstrain.

Finally I mentioned Professor Bubbles' invitation to me to give a story telling up at Castle Heights, and mentioned that I intended playing

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my own accompaniments to the songs I should sing on Aunt Lucy's old guitar.

"And you have it here with you?" Orrin asked. "And you know the songs?"

"Lucy's old guitar!" Uncle John mused dreamily. "How well I remember it, and Lucy's singing. Lucy was my favorite sister."

"Won't you give us a rehearsal?" Orrin suddenly sprang up. "Tell me where it is, and I'll bring it. We'd all love to hear some of those old songs." Uncle John gave me a quick look that seconded Orrin's request.

"In my room—on my bed. I was practicing this afternoon."

I would not look at Aunt John while he was gone: she appeared absorbed in the "Sunken Bell"—but did not turn a leaf. Orrin brought back the antique instrument, and some of Aunt Lucy's music—yellow as old roses. I watched Uncle John's face as his eyes fell on them. He came over to the sofa where I was sitting. Aunt John snapped over a page of her book. He took up a sheet: it had the name "Lucy Culpepper" written in a pretty, old-fashioned hand on the front of it.

"Nellie Gray!" Uncle John turned a leaf as you would lift the veil from a dear dead face.

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"I remember the very day Lucy got this from Vicksburg. . . . She sang it for us that night. We sat out on the gallery—she just inside. . . . I can smell the honeysuckles yet—sing it, first, Dulcie—try it for me."

I softly played the prelude: then I sang the plaintive old melody:

"Oh my poor Nellie Gray,
They have taken you away,
And I'll never see my darling any more.
I'm sitting by the river,
And I'm watching all the day,
But you've gone from my old Kentucky home."

Uncle John's head dropped, and his thin fingers twined themselves together in his lap. I sang on! I, too, saw the moonlight on Arden porch, and smelled the white and gold honeysuckles. As I finished Uncle John murmured:

"Just like Lucy's voice! I could have sworn it was Lucy singing—she was my favorite sister."

"Thank you," Orrin said, softly. "It was—more than delightful. What a pathos there is in your lovely voice—and the old instrument suits it! Won't you sing something else for us?"

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Aunt John slapped her pages together and rose.

"You'll excuse me," she clapped, coldly. "I must get up my talk for tomorrow at the club," and she swept out. Orrin's cheek burned a displeased red—I saw it.

Uncle John picked out his favorites and I sang them. I tell you I know that old man, with his head back against a satin pillow and his white lids closed, for the first time in fifty years dreamed old dreams over, and felt old emotions stir.

At eleven o'clock Orrin started and looked at his watch.

"I almost forgot—an engagement," he said guiltily. "I wish I could—hear one more, but—I am expected." He left hastily.

I hastened to make the most of the moments alone with Uncle John. "This song is 'The Vacant Chair,' " I said. "I've heard Dad tell how they used to miss *you*, Uncle John: how grandfather used to pray night after night as they knelt in the old library, 'Lord, send back my sons; they have wandered away into strange lands' (Uncle Stephan, too, you know); 'let them see the truth concerning their own unhappy country.' " Then I sang:

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"We will meet, but we will miss him;
There will be a vacant chair."

Uncle John gulped once, but at that minute Aunt John loomed like a big dark rock in the doorway.

"Come, John; it's time you were going to bed. You've had enough of that *mush* for one time. I'll ring for Charlotte"—Aunt John *will* call Mammy by her big name—"to help you upstairs."

But I sprang up, and with my guitar and music went—limping a little, as a precaution—out of the room.

It has been a divine evening—but I know Orrin is somewhere at this minute with Ann Lamar!

December Twenty-fifth

My first Christmas away from home, and so different from the way we spend it South—only a stiff imitation of the season, it seemed to me. I had made lots of little gifts from pretty scraps picked up on the bargain counters. Uncle and Aunt John gave me a glorious set of red fox furs. Dad sent a box of the crimson cactus flowers we always have at Christmas. I wore them and everybody thought them beautiful. Orrin sent me gorgeous roses and candy. Clarence sent books. But it's over now, and I'm glad. I've not been so homesick for Dad since I've been in New York.

January Fifth—of a New Year!

Is this really me who sits here with a beautiful heap of bills, half dollars, quarters, and even jolly little dimes in my lap? not to speak of the lot of shining memories filling my happy brain. I'll look them over—the memories first: they are the most valuable returns from my afternoon's performance, after all: "Is not the body more than raiment?"

Miss Bubbles went up to Castle Heights with me. She is really "peoply" when you get down under that crust of modern faddism that makes a funny grotesque out of her. She's got a real feminine, home-hankering, man-wanting, baby-adoring old heart; I don't care if she does write queer jumbles of stuff and call it *vers libre*. She can't go by a movie playhouse without looking at the posters, and she asked me for my new boudoir-cap pattern.

It's a beautiful place—Castle Heights, and I adore real girls. They sat still as death during my old songs; they stirred and bubbled to all the old stories that Mammy and Dad had told me; they broke into roars of laughter at my im-

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personations, and they nearly clapped the roof off for more of my plantation dancing. They called me back after nearly every "number"—we are getting professional! I had to give them even some of the hymns they sing at Mammy's church, "Spot-Without-A-Wrinkle"—called "Spot" for short. We had an hour and a half of unadulterated good time together, and in the middle of the program they sent me up a silver basket of sunburst roses.

Just after I had returned to the stage after the short intermission, a new face in the audience seemed to reach up out of that mass of faces and take hold of my senses. . . . *It was Orrin's*—away back of the girls, turned clear and smiling up to the platform. I wanted to shake him, even while I experienced a mad rush of joy! He might have broken me all up—but he didn't. I caught at myself and rose to new heights of inspiration. I was telling the cleverest story I know, and while I ignored Orrin with my eyes I saw him all the time. I saw him when he looked serious, and I saw him when he laughed, and I know I enjoyed myself as great actresses do when they are swaying multitudes.

When it was over the girls crowded about to

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meet me. They said all sorts of nice things. They gave yells about me, and finally we all got to kissing—just like girls at home. I never *had* such a good time! Orrin stood off on a little step, and looked and smiled. I waved at him once, and he seemed to be enjoying himself, too.

Then they bore me away to a big, lovely parlor and we had tea. Miss Bubbles escorted Orrin over. He finally got a chance to come and congratulate me. As I was about to get into my hat and coat to leave, Professor Bubbles handed me a little canvas bag:

“We are indebted to you for one of the most charming and instructive afternoons the institution has ever known,” he said. “I hope you will find the compensation—er—slightly adequate.”

“Compensation?” I looked at him blankly, I’m sure. “I feel flattered to death at the way the girls have treated me—and you-all, and the flowers——”

“My dear Miss Culpepper, you didn’t imagine we would ask you to come to us and give us so abundantly of your remarkable gifts, and your valuable—er—knowledge, without substantial compensation? We always—er—pay

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our lecturers, of course. I supposed you knew that."

"Oh—I can't take money for what I've done," I gasped. "Why, it's been a big compliment—and besides, I've enjoyed it. I never thought of being *paid* for it."

But he said I must take it: it was part of the college entertainment-course, and it would insist on paying for it. Orrin came up and laughed at my modesty, as he called it. Miss Bubbles finally opened my hand-bag and put it in, and it was settled. Then she said that as I had my cousin to go back with me she believed she would spend the night at Castle Heights. I caught the gleam in Orrin's eye: he assured her it would be all right, and urged her to stay. Then we started home—all the girls waving good-by and begging me to come back again—Orrin tight hold of my arm, me throwing kisses back from the automobile.

"P-h-e-w!" whistled Orrin, "if your little head isn't turned by all that adulation you're proof against the spoiling effects of public worship. I've never seen a prettier ovation, really."

"Not even—at the Broadway theaters?"
Now, why should I have gone and reminded him

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of Ann-Dawn—here in my happiest hour? Why does a woman always do the thing she wishes least to do? He thought a minute.

“Yes; woman’s admiration for woman is always genuine. A big mixed New York audience might be won by things other than real artistic merit.”

“A woman can touch the men in her audience by other charms than—mere genius,” I remarked, cannily.

He bowed his head. “But—you have the—other charms, also.”

“Then maybe I won my girls by my hair—or—my—feet?” I murmured wickedly. He threw back his head and laughed. He saw the point, and appreciated it. Then he spoke more soberly:

“Yes, there are many actresses who have won by beauty, but not one wishes to admit it. The art of some beautiful women lacks something, just as your camellia lacks perfume.” . . . He surely couldn’t have meant Ann! “I wish your friend, Auguste Bindmann, had run up to hear you this afternoon.”

“O-h! Was I really that much worth while?”

“You were perfectly charming, Miss Dulcie

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—I mean just what I say. You are as full of soul as a little nut is of meat.”

I flushed all over, and smelled my roses. He cares for the inside as well as the externals! “It is a fascinating thing, the theater, whether you act or write for it.” Then he told me his secret ambition. He wants to become a playwright. He has already written two or three, but has never yet sold one. He is determined, though. I saw that by the set of his jaw while he talked of it. I asked him if he had ever shown them to Mr. Bindmann, and he laughed, looking at me with that twinkle that sometimes comes into his gray eyes:

“Auguste Bindmann, the manager, my dear little Miss Dulcie, is a totally different person from Auguste Bindmann, the friend.”

I am glad I know him as the friend; I suppose if I had a play to sell, now, it would be different: he’d be hard and impossible to me.

Dinner was over when we got home, so we had ours alone. Wasn’t Aunt John surprised—and wrathy—when we arrived together, and she heard that Orrin had been up to Castle Heights, and brought me home without Miss Bubbles! She would be just as much opposed to me as she is now to Dawn. If she knew *why*

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I'm trying to attract him she'd fall on my neck and bless me, I suspect.

I've just counted my compensation—poor, funny old Bubbles! One hundred dollars—whoo-ee! For telling a few darky stories and singing a few fo'-de-war songs. It's a funny world! I'm going to write to Dad before I sleep. How his innocent old eyes will pop! I shall send him fifty of it: I just do need some more clothes. My suit is showing its nap in spots, and Mrs. Vanderwand has invited me to pour tea at a swell function she's giving next week.

Two weeks later (date doubtful)

I've been sick—no, *ill*, Aunt John says I must say.

Two weeks in my room—with such an unaesthetic malady as grippe.

"It" seized me the day after I poured at Mrs. Vanderwand's in my lovely white crêpe, and Clarence proposed, and Orrin later took me to the theater—though not to see Dawn. . . . We had a lovely evening, and he has kept my room blooming with flowers all the time I have been sic—no, *ill*. He has also sent me several little notes by Mammy—bright, funny little messages of condolence—he says he's frightfully lonesome—which of course he doesn't mean. He stopped by my room one evening on his way down to dinner and peeped in, and laughed at me and then looked downright, sure-enough sympathy.

"Too bad you're knocked out like this," he said, "and missing so many good things! Mother says it's only a light cold, though, and we'll have you back soon."

"Very light!" I answered, almost too sweet-

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ly. "The whole of me, internally, feels like the ground does when you pull on a thousand-rooted old rag-weed and finally tear it out,—when I cough, you know,—which is every three seconds."

"Is it as bad as that?" His voice got soft. "Is there *anything* I can do for you?"

"I've been wanting something for two days," I caught at his offer. "Some stick-peppermint candy—the kind Dad used to bring me when I was a little girl and had a bad cold." I lost hold of myself. I wanted Dad so badly. I was sick and suffering and I needed somebody besides Mammy, that really cared; I turned my head down into my pillow. I knew it was childish, but—I've never been away from Dad before when I was sick—I *will* say "sick" if I want to! I've never been sick much in my life, but whenever I was it was made almost a festival of hurty happiness: Dad hanging over me all the time: chicken-soup and cup-custards, and flowers I didn't dream were in bloom. . . . I sobbed and sobbed, and suddenly I felt Orrin over me.

"Here—here—little girl! Miss Dulcie—*Sweet!*" He leaned over and took me, pillow and all, a second in his arms. I think he did

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it only as a big cousin would—I think he really didn't think of it at all—it just came. “You mustn't! Poor little thing! Please don't! You—you hurt me! I'll send you the candy—you shall have it in a little of no time.” Then he came to himself and laid me down—pillow and all, and stood up straight. I felt better, and I felt ashamed.

“I'm very—silly,” I said out of the depths of the feathers. “I—don't—cry—often: Please don't think I'm the—watering-pot kind of girl.”

“I think you're just the wonderfulest kind of little girl I've ever known; ill, so far away from home—and—here's Mammy with your dinner.”

He scuttled out, and I heard him speak to Tinie in the hall—she must have been there all the time. In about half an hour here came the loveliest box of candy—little satiny red and white sticks—modern aristocrats of the good old democratic peppermint family. . . . I noticed a hard glitter in Aunt John's eyes when she came in a little later with the doctor.

I'm still wobbly, and can't write more. I'm to go down to dinner tonight. I feel like a

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convict who's just finished his term. . . . Wonder if Orrin will stay at home this evening? I'm afraid during my sickness he may have fallen back into the old Dawn-Ann habit—there'll be no drawing him out again if he has.

P. S.

Forgot to say Professor Bubbles sent me a growing azalea while I was sic—ill: I got lots of letters from the girls at Castle Heights.

Uncle John left last night to attend the National Convention of Bankers in Los Angeles, California. He'll be gone several weeks: expects to take a little vacation while he's out there.

February First

— — — ! ! ! ! ! These signs represent unspeakable words and daggers. . . . I haven't any language to tell how furiously outraged I am.

I understand now the stony glitter in Aunt John's eyes the other night. I've also discovered what a poison-clawed pussy-cat that little Timie is!

Just after breakfast this morning Aunt John sent for me. I saw something unusual was up the minute I went into the library. Her face was cold as quartz rock in a snow-storm, and her voice came through her lips like steam through cracked ice.

"I have been waiting till you were quite well to—perform an unpleasant duty," she said, slowly and formally. "I have been greatly pained"—then the molten inside of her broke through and seethed over—"I have been shocked beyond measure to discover that though so young, and apparently so ignorant of the world, you really have the wisdom of certain practiced, unscrupulous women of—er—ques-

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tionable reputation"—I'm using her words as exactly as I can remember. "I ought to have suspected the night you appeared at my reception in that suggestive costume——" I laughed: I thought the severe interview only a tardy reprimand for that naughty bit of audacity.

"I haven't worn it since, Aunt John—and people didn't get so awfully shocked, after all. The same ones have invited me to things since—even nice ones like Professor and Miss Bubbles."

"I am not referring now to that characteristic—er—episode. The matter I must talk to you about this morning is of much graver significance—very much!"

"O-h, what have I done now?" I had refused to marry Clarence Vanderwand—that must be it! "But, Aunt—I didn't love him: I couldn't marry Clarence."

"Marry—Clarence! You don't mean to tell me he asked you! I feel like going over and congratulating dear Mrs. Vanderwand."

"Don't!—I might recall my refusal if she got too glad over it. Then what is it that has given you this awful shock?"

"Don't add flippancy to your other—er—unfortunate characteristics, Dulcie. It is sad

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enough when a young girl shows a disposition to scheme and plot to win the—er—attention of men, without being light over it.”

“I never schemed lightly in my life,” I declared warmly.

“Then you admit you have schemed?—you do plot to allure men? And you do it with deep and—er—sinister motives?”

“S-o-m-e-t-i-m-e-s——” for I saw I had made an admission.

“You confirm my information, then, of a disgraceful design you planned and carried out in my house to—er—*get my son* in your toils?”

I felt a fiery flush run over me. It flashed through me that Orrin had seen through my scheme—that he had known all the time I had no sprained ankle, but had humored my plot for—well, any one of several reasons. But to tell about it! A girl has a right to her little maneuvers, but a man has no right to tell, even if he sees through them.

“So he told you!” I exclaimed indignantly.

“No, your ruse was entirely successful; Orrin is as gullible as a baby. He would no more have suspected you of duplicity than he would have suspected me of pretending to have a

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sprained ankle simply to have him remove my shoe—and stocking! To look at my n-a-k-e-d foot!” Aunt John’s tongue handled the word as you lift a dead rat on the end of a board. All of a sudden I stopped being angry. . . . I laughed right out in Aunt John’s face.

“It was a dandy little scheme—and it did work beautifully!” I stopped—sobered. “But you will tell him—now.”

Her lips puckered as if some evil little sprite was drawing the gathering string that malice had already run through them.

“I have not decided whether I shall tell Orrin or not. He despises fraud. I should dislike for him to know what kind of girl his stepfather’s niece really is—and yet—I cannot run the risk of having you in the house with him any longer—men are men, you know.”

“What kind of girl do you mean? . . . What risk to Orrin, for goodness’ sake? I am not trying to *marry* him.”

“It would be more to your credit if you were. . . . You confess that you planned to get him to—to—take the most intimate liberties with you—to carry you upstairs in his arms—take you into your room—put you on your bed—and then you boast that you do not wish him to

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marry you! You are more hardened even than I thought."

I stop to remark on the awful way my step-aunt pronounced the word bed.

She named it as if it were the most loathly and disgraceful article on earth, instead of a dear, good, old, homely friend to mankind,—the spot where we stretch our tired limbs after the activities of the day: the cool, delightful place where we loll on warm afternoons and dream vague, happy things: beside which we kneel, with visions of our dear dead mother beside us, and drop little drops of the bravest resolutions that ever rose to overflow our souls and wet the nice white counterpane. Oh, my bed is always my dearest, most confidential friend—not anything to whisper about with goggly nastiness in one's eye.

"To come in and talk to you after you had gotten in your undress——" Aunt John brought out new evidence.

"In my kimono—kimonos are perfectly proper things."

The punch in the story was yet to come—I saw that.

"And you seem to have accomplished your purpose. Orrin was in your room while you

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were ill: alone with you—at your bed—he had his arms about you——”

“*That little cat, Tinie!*—And what if he was? Haven’t you a better opinion of your son—if you haven’t of me?”

“Who could blame him? You caught him off his guard. You practiced deceit upon him to get him under your influence. Do you think I can tolerate a thing like that going on in my very house?”

I could not appeal to Orrin, without admitting my—duplicity. I could not say to Aunt John, “I planned to get your son to fall in love with me so that he would fall *out* of love with my Cousin Cassius Lamar’s run-away wife”—I had given my word to Ann I would not blab.

“Well,” I said, finally, “I’ll put a stop to his attentions, if you object to them.”

“O-b-j-e-c-t? Have you no sense of decency?”

Then I understood. . . . “Look here, Aunt Electra,” I said, “there’s nothing indecent in anything I’ve done, and I am sure there has been no idea of anything improper in Orrin’s mind. I believe he really and truly—likes me, but I sha’n’t accept any small attention from him again.” But she was obdurate.

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"This little money mentioned in your Uncle's will can't be of any importance to you: I know you merely came to us for the pleasure of a stay in New York. . . . You ought to know that, under the circumstances, it will be impossible for us to keep you any longer, and it would be less embarrassing if you would conclude your—er—visit during your Uncle John's absence—I should hate to have to explain to him."

"Go back Now? Go home and forfeit that \$1,500? Why, Aunt John, could you ask me to do that? Not carry out my part of Uncle Stephan's will? I can't do that! No, sir—I won't do that!"

"You refuse?" She actually screeched.

"I do! I came to earn that fifteen hundred dollars, and I'm going to do it. I'm willing never to speak to Orrin again—but I'm going to have that money. I'm going to stay right here the full time—you can tell Orrin and Uncle John and anybody else you wish—but I'm going to take that money back to Arden with me."

I turned and ran out of the room and upstairs. . . . I reckon she'll tell Orrin tonight. I reckon he'll hurry up his marriage with Ann. . . . Well, I tried to save him, and, oh, you great big silly splashes—where did you come from?

Miss Dulcie from Dixie

From out my soul-cells of anger, that's all:
from my sense of insulted girlhood: from my
outraged Culpepper pride—my red-pepper
pride! Leave! *I reckon not!* It's my uncle's
house. Let her tell her wonderful son—for
whom no woman seems good enough! Where is
the Dove of Peace? Uncle Stephan, is your
ghost 'way out in California, that it doesn't help
me when I need it most?

Midnight

I had dinner alone. Aunt John joined Orrin downtown, and they dined at a restaurant, so Tinie told Mammy. I sat in solemn silence and brown velvet eating through six courses alone. I felt terribly like a marionette. It got on my nerves—then it got on my funny-bone: during the remaining salad, dessert and coffee I enjoyed myself. A *don't-give-a-d—n* sort of feeling (the kind Dad used to have before a battle) ran all through me, and was better than wine. After dinner I played on the grand piano, then came up to write Dad a rollicking letter—he mustn't suspect a thing.

An hour later

They came home as I was finishing my letter. . . . I heard Orrin come upstairs—he always takes two steps at a time. . . . He didn't go on up the next flight to his own suite—he ran up the hall towards mine. I stood up—my heart beating. Mammy was asleep. He tapped on my door—don't you *know* Aunt John was listening? My heart lost a beat—then thumped again.

“Miss Dulcie—Miss Dulcie—*dear!*” How funny one's heart does feel when it runs a race with itself. “Open the door just a tiny crack, won't you? Please—please—it's important; it's—life and death!”

I stood swaying back and forth a minute—then I went to the door.

“I can hear,” I said, without opening it; “what is it?”

“Listen—the Mom's old-fashioned: you mustn't mind her. She didn't understand: you'll overlook anything she said, won't you? She phoned me to wait down town: I didn't know we were leaving you all alone to your

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dinner, little girl. Please understand that. I know you were lonesome—I have some candies here—fruits glacés—I know how you love them. Open the door a crack and take them—please!”

“You don’t know about me,” I mustered up courage to answer back. “She hasn’t had time to tell you—*all!* Go back and ask her to tell you now—tell her I said so. I can do without the crystallized fruits——” I started to say I didn’t want them, but I couldn’t—I adore the ginger.

“Here, listen, Dulcie,” he never called me Dulcie before—“she’s told me everything, and I think—it was—too funny—and too—splendid for words. You clever little genius! How did you ever think of it? I wouldn’t take a fortune for it. I was a selfish beast when you first came: of course a little lady has to have some notice taken of her—it’s due her—so please open the door just enough to get your sweets, and I’ll go right away and let you enjoy them. The mother’s just bats on some of these old ideas of hers, and that’s the sheerest tommy-rot about your not speaking to me again while you’re here. I’ll go away from home and stay if you persist in it. . . . Here, take your candy and go to sleep eating it—like a good little child. I

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think you're the most splendid girl in the world—ginger and figs—please?"

I turned the key and opened a tiny crack.

"Put your hand through," he murmured. . . . Something warm and stinging happened to the one I slipped out. It sent shivers up and down me . . . you know, when you're having a tooth filled and the nerve is touched—like that, only the shock was not pain—quite the reverse. I jerked my hand back.

"You're not toting fair," I said, faintly. He put his empty hand through into my side.

"Just once more—touch my hand to prove it's all right, won't you—*won't you?*" he begged.

His hand was near my lips. Which of my ancestors was possessed of devils, I wonder? . . . I stooped and seized the tip of the first finger I came to—(which happened to be the heart finger)—lightly between my teeth, and bit it softly, but sharply—then dropped it, and sprang back. As I slammed the door I heard him swear softly, but not angrily, on the other side.

"You—little—crazy! . . . You're the most unaccountable—bewitching—here's your candy: you didn't get your glacés."

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"Set them down on the floor: I'll get them when you're gone."

"I'll see you tomorrow! You're not going to let anything make any difference between us?"

"That rests with Aunt John."

"Then I'll attend to it—good-night: it was the sweetest bite I ever had. I didn't know before that——"

"Mammy wants me," I cluttered loudly away from the door: she had really wakened and was asking what was the matter. When I slipped back ten minutes later the box of sweets was by the door and the hall was empty.

Oh, yes! Mammy recalls now that she came in one day—she thinks the day after I had gotten over my sprain—and caught Tinie looking into my diary. I suppose she read about my scheme and reported it to Aunt John. Mammy says she hadn't had time to read much—she must have missed everything concerning Ann-Dawn. . . . Mammy put it under lock and key immediately.

February Fifth

The atmosphere of the House of Culpepper of New York is tense and electrical. The feeling of a storm that broods yet never breaks gives you prickles down your spine. You go about with cocked ears and batting eyes like a filly that feels but does not understand the weather conditions. We meet, Orrin, Aunt John and I, whenever the exigencies of the household demand we should meet, in a sort of excessive politeness that might be humorous if it were not so uncomfortable. In strained domestic situations thank heaven for servants. "Appell, a little more butter," relieves the most appalling silence. "Appell, some wine, please," keeps you from shrieking or giggling outright.

Orrin asked me three nights hand-running—as Mammy says—to go out with him. I can't accept attentions from Orrin since he has found out how I planned to win his notice, and I can't explain the absolutely unselfish motives behind the scheme. Was ever leading lady placed in so misleading a part? I suppose he thinks I'm in love with him, and want him for myself.

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Besides, remember what Aunt John intimated!

After my third refusal—in her presence—he took his hat and overcoat and went out—to the theater and Dawn, I suppose. He hasn't asked me since. . . . So all my work to save him has been lost—and I've been put in a false position, besides. . . . Oh, I am so tired of being a woman! I really didn't know it was such a complex thing. No wonder Kipling and Shakespeare and King Solomon devoted so much attention to the subject. I could almost write some illuminating things on it myself. *It is better to let a man go to his destruction than to try to save him; it's too much like trying to save a drowning person—ten to one you get pulled down with him.* Dad—Dad, why didn't you tell me that night in the old summer-house that it would be like this? That there were adversaries who might nudge the elbows of a peace party while engaged in effecting an exchange of olive branches between belligerents. . . . Oh, Mumsey—whom I knew only one little hour—surely not long enough to get instructions for all the years to come—do all girls have these growing-woman pains about a spot just under their left breast, when they are nineteen, three months and seventeen days old?

February Eighth

The storm is upon us!

There is a spot, it is said, in the center of every tornado where there is absolute stillness; I am the spot. About me rages fury: in the very heart of it I sit—like a palpable quiet—writing this page.

Dad is here! How little space the tremendous things of life take in the telling!

After I had thwarted Aunt John in her first endeavor to cut short my stay and had refused to go home, she planned a bigger strategy. She wrote to Dad! Without telling me what she had done she wrote him all her ugly innuendoes. She deplored her discovery of the curiously decadent tendencies of his one and only child—a girl so young—and without a mother to guide her——! She felt too deeply the responsibility of having me in the house with her son—“an unusually unsuspecting and sympathetic young man”—to keep silent longer on the subject. A great and wicked city like New York offered many temptations to such a young woman, and though she endured the utmost

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grief and embarrassment in being obliged, as a family connection, to make this revelation to him, she felt sure he would appreciate her interest and kindly intention, etc., etc. She felt sure the small monetary benefit that would accrue from the carrying out of that proviso in the will of their lamented relative would not justify the danger that might thereby occur, and she advised her husband's brother, to whom she felt the affection of a real sister, to call his daughter back to his sheltering care and protection—oh, it was a prolix epistle!

Dad hadn't touched one cent of the money I had sent him; he didn't wait even to get his fresh handkerchiefs in from the wash; he came, just as he used to charge in battle. I had no intimation that he was coming. I went into the park in the afternoon and took Mammy with me. We walked about and sat on the benches in the sunshine. When we came home at five o'clock we found the battle on, and the guns fairly popping.

Dad had come up from the station in a taxi alone, and finding both me and Aunt John out, had sat down to wait. Aunt John had gotten home first; Dad says when she found him there, come to demand *proof* of her charges, she went

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gray as granite, and shook like Blowing Rock in a blizzard. . . . She had just made her most damaging accusation when I came in. Dad was snorting like a war-horse instead of a general. I caught sight of the back of his white hair tossing furiously, and I stopped short in the hall, I was so astonished; so I overheard his answer:

“Your son, you say, carried my daughter up the stairs? Is he such a beast that he cannot hold a young lady in his arms without evil in his soul? . . . Took her to her room, did he? You seem to think that a most disgraceful procedure. I’d have you to know, Madame, if you do not know it by experience and by your own cleanness of instinct—that a lady can be a lady with a *gentleman* in her room *all night long*—if that were unavoidable—or expedient. . . . And my daughter would be a lady of virtue on a desert island alone with your son—if he were not a brute. All else you have told me is mere foolishness—a girlish prank: my Dulcie is as lively as an innocent lamb in springtime. She has played just such youthful pranks on me and her old Mammy many a time. If your son has misjudged her——”

“Orrin has not, Dad!” I broke into the room, and ran into his arms. “It’s only Aunt John.

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I can tell *you* all about it, Dad.” I was kissing him, and laughing and sobbing all at once. “Oh, Dad, I’m so glad to see you! I’m so glad! You dear—dear blessed! Are you tired? What a long way for you to come: and you didn’t let me know! I would have met you. . . . You might have waited,” I turned on Aunt John, “to tell him all that rot till he was washed and rested.” Then he showed me her letter. Didn’t my phials of Peppery wrath suddenly pop open, and overflow my Uncle’s second wife? They did! Dad had to cork ’em with a long “Sh—h! honey, don’t! Maybe the lady hasn’t got our Southern way of looking at things. Maybe she’s seen so much of evil that her vision has got smoked. . . . Of course, Madame, I wouldn’t allow my daughter to remain longer in your house——”

“But I *am* going to remain, Dad. This is Uncle John’s house, and he is away—and he loves Aunt Lucy’s old songs—and his eyes have gotten positively misty once or twice when we talked of old times, and Arden and you. . . . Do you think I’m going to show the white feather and run home now? for a little thing like Aunt John’s accusing me of being slightly—er—swift, you know. You bet I’m not! I

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came to try and get you and Uncle John together again—I'm going to earn Uncle Stephan's fifteen hundred dollars, if I can."

Aunt John said she had done her duty: she couldn't *eject* her husband's relatives, of course. The house was ours as long as we chose to remain in it—oh, but she was furious! Also she was nonplussed. I think her first idea was to freeze us out. She asked if Dad would like to be shown to a room in such a way that he immediately answered "I shall stay in a hotel while I am in New York."

"Indeed you won't!" I declared. "Now, what would Uncle John say? How would that look to Aunt John's friends?—I know a lot of them and they would hear of it; what would they think of her letting her husband's brother stop in a hotel, and him away from home? I wouldn't let you put Aunt John in such a position." I saw I had made a happy stroke. She emphatically refused to consider such a thing. She assured him she was pleased beyond measure to have the privilege of entertaining him. She ordered his old valise taken to the blue room—the best in the house—and I went up with my arm round him.

When we had had our private love-feast to-

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gether, he said (touching on the sprained ankle subject) he knew I hadn't realized yet that I am not a child any longer, but "maybe it would be best to—to—treat this young man a little formally—in the light of the unpleasant view his mother had taken of the harmless episode."

"Oh, never fear, Dad," I answered. "We're formal enough now. We're as formal as butter and cold biscuits on a winter morning."

"I am glad of that: that will be best. That has surely convinced my brother's wife of her mistake. . . . I think we should be able to get away by tomorrow."

"G-e-t?—Now, Dad, listen to me once for all: I tell you I came to New York to stay six months, and if Orrin, himself, should accuse me of being a vampire I'd stay right on. I'm going to put a new roof on Arden and make a payment on that mortgage. What does it really matter about anything else?"

Orrin didn't come to dinner. He sent for his dress suit. I suppose he dined at his club and went to the theater afterwards; then took Dawn out for supper. Dinner with us was not so bad. I rattled like a talking machine straight through from soup to coffee. I simply wouldn't let Dad be frosted by Aunt John. She remembered that

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she had an engagement with Mrs. Vanderwand, and left us to each other for the evening. . . . After I had tucked him into bed, and we were sure he was asleep, Mammy slipped out his shabby old clothes, and spent hours cleaning and pressing them. I have a little money left: I must get him a few things tomorrow.

Tuesday

There are harder things about this peace-tour than trying to effect a reconciliation between the warring factions. I am engaged in a little war of my own. Dad is determined to take me back with him. He swears he would not get "Stephan's money by the sacrifice of his own child." You'd think it was some sort of an Iphigenia or Jephtha's Daughter affair. He has ordered me "*as a father with unquestionable authority*" to pack my trunk and be ready to leave Thursday. Now what can I say to that? What can I do? Dad is the tenderest old creature in the world—but Dad is a stone wall when he determines upon a thing. I think he has been silently watching, and when Dad watches silently he sees the very soul-springs of you. He has seen Aunt John's. He knows that for all her smooth exterior her springs are tight and cramped and they are wound to spring a deadly alarm at me the moment he is gone. She wishes me away, and he knows it. She is determined to make me go.

Wednesday

The springs are more tightly wound than ever—for *Orrin has gone away!* The fact came as an entire surprise to me—I feel sure it did to Aunt John.

He sent a man from his club yesterday afternoon to pack his bag, and to bring Aunt John a note. He is going off on a little vacation: he prefers mid-February for his! The theatrical company of which Dawn-Ann is so winning a member is starting on a tour: Orrin fancies he will enjoy the novelty of a little spin around the country with them—becoming a sort of near-Thespian for a few weeks. Aunt John says I ran him off: I made his home so unpleasant for him that he turned to the most unconventional relief that was offered—offered, mind you; he would never have thought of it himself, according to Aunt John. Very likely it was, though; Ann is not shy on offering things—in her own ingénue way. He had gotten almost weaned away from the actress' society—my stepaunt says—he had almost gotten over his—er—infatuation, when this other more—er—un-

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fortunate circumstance upset him, and sent him back pell-mell, helter-skelter, to the stage adventuress' arms!

"I suppose he thinks as all women are made up of craft and duplicity——" I played into her hand.

"But," she fell to the play, "he has always contended that this actress is a perfectly honest girl: she was simply unfortunate in having been put upon the stage by her relatives when she was a mere child. He says she is the soul of innocence."

"While I am quite the reverse," I remarked dryly—the whole thing was so bitingly funny—just like drinking strong soda-water. "And if he had not gone with Dawn, Aunt," I played my next card, "he'd been philandering round here with me—maybe falling into an—er—infatuation with me—he seems so easy a mark: and since Dawn is so much the more innocent of us two temptresses, you ought to be thankful he's chosen the lesser of the evils."

What could she say against that argument? She simply rose and strutted like an angry turkey-cock from the room. Later she had a talk with Dad. He came out of it with two spots burning red on his cheek-bones and ordered me

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to commence my packing. . . . Then I made a strategic move. I reminded him that I had no money to go back on. He had his return ticket, oh, yes: but Mammy and I could not travel on our faces—no matter if the conjunction of the two did appear as interesting as a chocolate éclair—as somebody had said. This stumped him. Of course Uncle Stephan had not provided for his prospective beneficiary being a quitter.

Dad said he'd have to think over the dilemma. He could telegraph to Cousin Cassius to try and sell one of our two working mules, and forward the money, but it would take a little time. I tried to persuade him not to take any notice of Aunt John, but "his daughter to stay where her very integrity had been questioned?" He shook his white mane and pranced. I knew Aunt John would gladly give me the money to go home, but he would have scorned that. He was set on the sacrifice of old Sal—the mule. Then I had another inspiration. Couldn't I give another story telling somewhere and make enough money? Anyhow it would save time—and old Sal. I told Dad my idea and persuaded him to hold off a few hours. Then I flew down to Miss Bubbles—

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Aunt John had not told her anything: nobody rehashes petty scandal to Miss Bubbles. The poetess thought. She recalled a Southern woman who had given some highly successful matinées in one of the theaters and made both fame and money out of them: Miss Bubbles thought her performance no better than mine—besides the lady was not so young—and—pret—I don't care to put down in black and white just what Miss Bubbles said—anyway, I was reminded of Mr. Bindmann. I leaped up, gave Miss Bubbles such a kiss that she glowed like a real opalescent thing of soap and air, and went out like a dart. I flew to Mr. Bindmann's office: he was in—he always is. I told him all in a breath what I wanted to do: I asked him to ring Miss Bubbles and ask her about it: she had heard me up at Castle Heights. He asked if I'd come into the theater and let him hear some of my things. . . . We went into the great, empty dim place that I'd seen only filled with faces. Mr. Bindmann sat far back, and I came out upon the bare stage, trembling with the exciting novelty of the situation. I know I never before felt such delight in telling my stories, and I sang like Yellow Lize at a revival, and Aunt Lucy thinking of her sweetheart killed at Fair Oaks.

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Finally Mr. Bindmann rose like a ghost out of the dimness, and held up his hand.

"We'll give the *matinée*," he said. "When can you be ready?"

"O-h!" tears popped into my happy eyes, "do—you—mean—it?"

"We'll launch a new artiste on Broadway. Can you give it two weeks from tomorrow?—it will rush us, but you say you are in a hurry. We must have some good photographs made—at once—tomorrow." Mr. Bindmann never hangs fire over anything he decides to do.

Dad was amazed, and dubious, and pleased all at once: he has the old Southern idea about the stage, but when I assured him it was no more than saying a piece at Commencement he was mollified, and consented to spare old Sal the humiliation of being sold out of the Culpepper family. He declares, however, that he will not stay the time under this roof, and has detailed me to find a suitable boarding-house. I'm at my wit's end: I'll not find that place today, at any rate.

Thursday Night

Went to have my pictures taken this morning. Then for a rehearsal—Mr. Bindmann sitting down in front, telling me when to speak louder: when to work up a point a little more—when to hold a note—I took my guitar with me today. What a wonder he is—and so kind! We are going to do this every day. To keep peace I went out in the afternoon to hunt that boarding place. Of course I didn't find one—and came home worn out. Aunt John had heard about the *matinée*, and the reason for it—and had offered Dad money for our tickets home: of course he had indignantly refused it. When I reached home she, too, was upset. She knew it would not redound to her credit if we moved, and she insisted that I give up such an idea. She declared it would be a very bad bit of business on my part, as it would take away the prestige of her influence. Wasn't that a way to put it? I told her I was afraid I couldn't dissuade Dad from his purpose—and so the matter rests tonight. Thank God that between day's hard-written sentences He dots down His little black periods of night!

Friday Night

An incomprehensible *something* has happened! A mighty change has taken place in Aunt John: could the boarding-house idea have effected it? I can hardly believe it. My step-aunt has something up her sleeve! To explain:

Just before noon today I went down into the library to get a book I was needing. A caller was just entering the front door: I saw her give her card to Tinie, who took it up to Aunt John while the lady waited in the reception hall. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and well dressed. I knew Aunt John was ready to go out somewhere to lunch, and she had remarked that she was already late, so I thought to myself that the lovely caller had chosen an unfortunate time for her visit. But Tinie presently came back and asked the lady into the drawing-room. A minute later I heard the rustle of Aunt John's taffeta petticoat. I saw the meeting from the library—both doors being partly open. They met as if they were strangers—I should almost say as if the caller were a social undesirable. Aunt John led her further

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into the drawing-room and I slipped back upstairs with my book.

When we were called into lunch, lo and behold! behind her own chair, hat and gloves off, wearing a smile such as I had never seen upon her face except when she was toadying to some of her wealthiest friends, waited Aunt John! Her stony eyes glistened: she nodded her puffed black head:

“L-o-v-e-l-y day!” she actually cooed. “So encouraging, my dear. I do hope the weather will remain so propitious for your matinée. I am going to telegraph John to come home for it—and to see you, brother Justice.” She swept her eyes from me to Dad, and we sat and gazed at her—about as dazed as two birds before a snake. Presently Dad found his voice:

“I forbid you to do that! I did not come to New York to make a social or any other kind of visit. I only came to take Dulcie home.” His meaning was unmistakable: if Uncle John was to see the old rebel he would have to make the first advance. “I allowed my little girl to visit your—his home: we expect a return of our courtesies in the South.”

“And we mean to make them,” the old cat purred. “Appell, this is not the wine I wished:

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bring some of that favorite of my husband's," so she dispatched the servant. "You don't think, brother Justice, that we are really going to allow you to make this—er—unwise move? If I have said anything to—er—offend you, or Dulcie, I assure you I am deeply grieved. I did not mean it as you took it: I was merely wishing to warn our impulsive little girl: I knew she had had no experience in a great city, and she is *so* untrammeled and—trustful." *Oh, ye gods!* "I may have, when I first heard of the—er—little incident I wrote you of, taken rather a severe view of it, but I assure you since thinking it over—since meeting you and learning more of the real Southern character—I see it in an altogether new light. I realize what a merely girlish, innocent, child-like jest it was—and I wish to—to—take it back and cool it in the pantry, Appell—acknowledge this, and—er—really to *apologize* to you, and our dear Dulcie"—*more gods and little fishes!* "and be given a chance to—er—make amends."

Dad sat perfectly silent. One thought was running like a squirrel in a cage round and round in my brain. What had that beautiful, strange visitor had to do with this sudden change in Aunt John? Something, I was con-

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vinced: the change had followed too immediately after her call. What variety of bug had she put into my stepaunt's ear? Was she some personage of vast importance who had advised Aunt John that "it would never do" to allow Uncle John's brother from Mississippi and his niece who had been visiting in his home, to leave it in 'this peculiar and inexplicable manner? Anyway, here was Aunt John apologizing like a pretty lady—talking like a pacifist. Dad did not tumble to her change of heart as quickly as she had expected he would. I chuckled inwardly—but maintained a wounded look. I wished her to put it on strong! She did! She begged us, almost with tears in her eyes, to give her an opportunity to show us how she regretted her mistake, and to allow her to make amends. She implored Dad to remain in her house till after my *matinée*, and to allow me to stay with them *the full time designated in Uncle Stephan's will!* You would have thought the family estrangement had been a matter of deepest regret with her all these years—if you had not known Aunt John. I cried softly—it was beginning to be time for me to forgive and forget(?) I meant to stay and get that fifteen hundred. I put my face into my napkin (in my emotion I mistook

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it for my handkerchief) and sobbed—i. e. convulsively gulped down a giggle. Aunt John shed a whole sprinkle of tears into her hand-embroidered handkerchief (she took pains not to get her napkin by mistake). Dad grew helpless, and began to soften: two women's tears are enough to make dough of any man's heart! I saw my advantage. I sprang out of my chair, and ran between him and his plate. I clung round his neck as I begged him to forgive Aunt John, who had probably judged me by her women friends, and her son by the men she entertained at her house: she really wasn't to blame for not having had the opportunity of knowing real honest-minded men and women—oh, didn't I hand her a slice of humble-pie! And didn't I enjoy seeing her eat it without a visible grimace! Mightn't I stay and give poor Aunt Electra a chance to show she was sorry? It wasn't charitable—it wasn't chivalrous—there I touched him. You can touch an old-school Southerner any time by reminding him of his duty towards women. He promised to think it over—and I knew my point was won. Aunt John and I took down our napkin and handkerchief and proceeded to make a fairly enjoyable meal.

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I have not accepted my stepaunt's change of heart with all the confidence of a Methodist preacher at a country camp-meeting. Many a hardened old sinner has been touched by "conviction" on some spot other than his conscience.

That beautiful caller looked something like an actress, herself. Could she have told Aunt John the truth about Dawn-Ann? And does that indefatigable mother wish to try and use me as a decoy to bring her son back from a greater danger? Poor little unsuspecting duck of a me!

February Twelfth

Uncle John is still in Pasadena enjoying himself as only a badly henpecked old Chanticleer far from his own poultry yard can do.

Dad would not allow Aunt John to telegraph him to come home on account of his being here: he said it would be a tacit admission that he thought he had been in the wrong—and he wasn't willing to give out that impression. But he has consented for me to stay in this house a few days longer. I think he is still considering the question of my staying my time out. He looks perfectly dandy in his new suit and overcoat: of course the niece of Mr. John Clay Culpepper—herself about to make her platform debut under the management of Mr. August Bindmann—had no difficulty in buying whatever she wanted—on time.

My new photographs are—well, they flatter me to death. I've been compared in the newspapers to several stage and screen favorites. Mr. Bindmann has seen to it that I'm getting plenty of press notice. I have a divine little frock—so girlish and quaint. Professor Bub-

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bles has called—full of enthusiasm. A good many of Aunt John's friends have rung up and sent little notes of interest. Aunt John has already engaged a box.

February Twenty-third

The matinée is over, and I am still keyed up to concert pitch. . . . Will I ever get to sleep tonight? Such an afternoon for me—ME! The house was full, and such gorgeous people! All the Castle Heights girls were there, sitting rapt-eyed, treating it as if it were their performance—as if I were their very own, and they loved me to death. Each girl wore a big cluster of violets when she came in, and in the middle of the program they had an usher pass a silver salver among them; each laid her flowers upon it and they sent the great purple heap up to me—with the salver, my name and the date engraved on it—to keep. . . . Won't I enjoy passing the Lamar girls lemonade on that salver when I get back to Arden?

Aunt John was in her box with Mrs. Vanderwand and Eloise Lander, to whom Clarence has taken his wounded heart, and who seems about to cure it with her golden salve. Mrs. Eugenia Deepheart, also, was in the box, and she sent up a bunch of wonderful orchids. Dad was expected to occupy a seat in the box but he re-

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fused; he shrank from publicity when his little girl was going to be the whole show, so he took a seat middle-ways in the house. My reception *was* flattering: I received encore after encore. Near the close I sang a medley of old Southern airs, that ran into Dixie. As it ended I heard a cheer! The real rebel yell rose from somewhere in the middle of the house, and I knew the voice! Then the applause broke out almost as wildly as it does whenever at home the South's national air is heard. I saw Dad standing up—waving his big gray hat aloft—and I knew the people were applauding him as much as they were me, or our beloved song. That was really the wonderful moment of the whole afternoon.

Dad had been crying when he came up behind the scenes—he didn't say a word, just held me in his arms a long time, his lips on my hair. Mr. Bindmann came in to speak to me: when I rather timidly asked if he was satisfied, he said, "No. . . . I want another." Then he handed me my check—it took my breath—P-h-e-w! I'll lay away enough of this to pay for two tickets home—that mule-scare taught me a lesson.

How sweet my room looks full of flowers—and Orrin is somewhere in Colorado watching Dawn play her pretty little ingénue rôle!

Next Day

The papers are saying lovely things about me—and I've had an offer to go into vaudeville!

Aunt John is simply pie to me today—not humble pie, either. We had a lot of friends to come in for tea. Dad looked splendid standing up so white and straight talking with them of the South—its past, present, and future. Some of our callers had heard about Mammy and wished to see the “curiosity”—an ex-slave who has stuck to her former owner's family all through these fifty-odd years. I brought her down to “meet de comp'ny fokes,” and a reporter came in to interview me, so he wrote up Mammy, too, and asked for her photograph—Getting famous in her old age! He wanted Dad, too, but the old patrician dislikes publicity. Anyway, the reporter asked his views on a number of the questions of the day, so I suppose the whole d—ed family will be represented.

But the most important feature of the tea this afternoon was the appearance at it of Mrs. Tolley Lockhardt—that same beautiful stranger

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whose call—I shall always believe—so mysteriously changed my stepaunt's manner towards me. Incidentally I still think her the most gorgeously beautiful creature I have ever seen. She is the bride of a second cousin of Aunt John's—and thereby hangs a tale. Eloise Lander whispered it to me after everybody was gone and Eloise had run up to my room to see my flowers.

Mrs. Tolley Lockhardt is under a cloud! Which, of course, explains why everybody looked as if they had had ice-water dashed down their spines when she appeared in my aunt's drawing-room this afternoon; also why Aunt John seemed so nervous while introducing her around. . . . I am sure Aunt John—the President of the Purity League—isn't it funny?—has undertaken to dissolve the cloud.

The doubtful lady, it seems, was at one time private stenographer for the Wall Street millionaire, Mr. Tolley Lockhardt, whom I mentioned as being a second cousin of Aunt John. Well, there rose an awful scandal about the millionaire and his beautiful typist. Tolley was a married man, and his wife finally filed a suit for divorce, naming the stenographer as co-respondent. Then the fair vampire disappeared from


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the Wall Street office—but after Mrs. Lockhardt secured her divorce, the charmer reappeared as Mrs. Tolley No. 2.

Mr. Tolley installed her in his splendid Fifth Avenue home and waited for his former friends to call—but none came; the general sympathy had been with Mrs. Lockhardt No. 1, and the usurper was cut dead. Even Aunt John—second cousin of the groom—turned her shocked shoulders, and refused to overlook things. Mrs. Tolley was in a bad way towards ever getting into decent society. She had been married three months, and until this afternoon, Eloise says, she has not been into a private home in New York.

Now, it isn't like Aunt John suddenly to forego conventionality, and do a thing that will incite criticism from her influential friends. . . . What an important call that must have been, so completely to overhaul Aunt John—inwardly and out.

I believe Dad's going to let me stay my full time. Aunt John's repentance *seems* so sincere—and I'd hate to shake his beautiful old-fashioned faith in humanity.



February Twenty-fifth

Dad is gone! How empty New York seems!

Two Hours Later

Orrin is back! . . . He got in about noon, and went directly to his office, sending his bag on to the house. Aunt John came to me at once. She told me about his being back, and asked me as a favor to her—a favor she would never be able to repay, she said—to treat him as I had treated him before she made her—er—unfortunate mistake. She said Orrin really admired me immensely: that he had looked on that little joke of mine as only a pretty prank, and she implored me to be nice to him again. I saw through her: she was as transparent as glass. She is more afraid of Dawn than ever, and of the two vampires she considers me the less deadly. I promised her I would treat Orrin as I did the other young men I know—and that is exactly how I mean to treat him. I don't doubt that matters are now so satisfactorily arranged between him and Dawn that our association—whatever there is to be of it—will be on both sides indifferently easy.

Aunt John is making all sorts of preparations for his first dinner at home. She has ordered

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the dishes he likes best, the flowers he prefers—and she has planned for the three of us to go to the opera afterwards. Most significant of all she ordered me a lovely new gown—a present! Gee! Aunt John must feel desperate about Ann-Dawn to be enhancing me in this manner!

One A. M.

We were waiting in the reception hall when Orrin came down for dinner. Theatrical life has told on him. His face looked slightly gray and hollow—but his eyes were magnificently lighted. . . . Have I ever mentioned Orrin's eyes, specifically? They are gray like the surface of clear water on a bright day, and his thoughts leap to the surface and skim across, making little flashes or shadows run all over them. All around them his lashes grow dark like fringes of black grass—ever see any outside of millinery? . . . Next to Orrin's eyes I love his strong, cleft chin, and the way his mouth dents deeply in at the corners when he laughs: I wonder if Dawn's lips have ever followed those dents? . . . I like the sleek backward sweep of his brown hair, too: I've noticed that all curly headed people respect the "straight and narrow" way followed by other people's locks, and vice versa. Orrin enlightened me about the latter. This very evening as we sat side by side in our opera-box he murmured that there was one indentation in

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my hair—just over my ear, close to him, that he was positive was created by nature just to fit somebody's lips—I reckon he thinks he can say that sort of thing to me now that he knows about that—unsprained ankle. I reckon he thinks I am the kind of girl you must flatter. He is some actor, himself: he said it just as if he meant it.

The opera was “Madame Butterfly”—poor little broken-winged Butterfly! Isn't it queer how we go deliberately to have our heart-strings torn almost to tatters for pleasure? It was a beautiful house, and Orrin sighed with a sort of spontaneous content as he settled in his chair to my left and murmured:

“Gee! but it's great to be back—and—*here!*”

I made no comment. I suppose he thought he was throwing dust in my eyes about his feelings—having to leave Dawn far out in Idaho and return to home and mother: not to speak of business and his little visiting stepcousin. I merely responded that I, too, loved the feel of a great audience. Then he congratulated me on the success of my matinée—he had read the papers.

Mrs. Tolley Lockhardt, gorgeous in a sort of flame-colored velvet, was in a box almost oppo-

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site ours. She bowed frantically to us, and the two men with her also bowed—one of them turned his glasses on us and looked an uncomfortably long time. During the intermission the whole party left their box and presently appeared at the back of ours. The elder man, who was Mr. Tolley, greeted "Cousin Electra" cordially. Mrs. Tolley glowed in beside him, speaking effusively to all of us, and introducing Mr. Tolley to me. Then she made way for the other man. He was tall, slender and middle-aged, with an aristocratic hook on his nose, and a crop of wan, sparse hair parted through the middle by a widely worn path that made me think of the one to the boys' old swimming-hole through the bleached, nipped pasture at Arden, at the tag-end of summer. He wore an eyeglass—just one eye had grown old—nobody quite fails these modern times.

His manners are what are usually called "polished." Now, Dad's manners are just himself showing through. . . . Mrs. Tolley introduced him as her brother-in-law, and Aunt John called him Cousin Albert. While the others talked back and forth he talked entirely to me. Before we noticed it the curtain went up for the next act, and Mr. Albert Lockhardt laughed

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and said we'd have to make a family party of it. He took the chair Orrin had occupied during the first act. I noticed that Aunt John did not look pleased. She sat further back with Mr. Tolley; Orrin and Mrs. Tolley sat in front with Mr. Albert and me. I soon forgot everything except poor little Cho-cho-san on the stage.

Before they left our box Mr. Albert Lockhardt asked Aunt John if she wouldn't give him a cup of tea tomorrow afternoon. . . . I have learned that he is a widower—bona-fide, not by the grace of the courts. He is a multi-millionaire, like his brother Tolley, and is a much-sought society man, being a great possible catch. . . . I don't think Aunt John has ever been very intimate with the Lockhardts, though they *are* cousins.

Orrin took us afterwards to one of the splendid restaurants. My! I could hardly eat for looking. I would have had a perfectly wonderful evening, only I kept puzzling over Orrin's manner: he seemed so really happy. I can't think just because I made that bold, bad play at him he's thinking of a flirtation. Maybe he's big enough to want me to feel easy, being-as-how I've got to stay under the same roof with

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him a couple of months longer. Well, I'll meet him half way. We can be sort of cousins till my visit is over. Aunt John seems radiant over our unexpressed, though tacit, understanding; evidently she doesn't realize what it is based upon. Wonder how it feels to be a multi-millionairess!

February Twenty-sixth

You recall the evening when our friend Mr.
Longfellow saw

The lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist;
And a feeling of sadness came o'er him,
That his soul could not resist.

Well, that's the kind this afternoon was. . . .
I stood behind Aunt John's filmy curtains and
looked out over a street full of blowing webs
of rain—dotted sparsely with great black toad-
stools, which were the wet umbrellas of the
people hurrying past. Like the "vision" in
the movie film, a picture of dear old Arden sud-
denly blotted out that sodden city street. . . .
I saw the great pine woods, green through the
downpour. I saw the mottled roads wander-
ing off like trails to regions of mystery. I
felt their lure, as I had often felt it on wild
afternoons like this. I saw myself, in my old
brown corduroy, mounted on Brown Bet, go fly-
ing on and on—mud splashing on ankles and
face—naked oaks racing us, purple cedars

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swimming by, speeding anywhere—anywhere—whipped on by the delicious sting of the rain in our faces—the tingle of the reckless storm in our veins. . . . And here I stood, this afternoon, cooped into Aunt John's four stone walls, hooked into a rose taffeta bodice, waiting to pour *tea* to a super-civilized millionaire!

At this point he came in. *He likes tea!* He drank three cups. He doesn't talk of anything but you and himself as affected by you. He presents you a string of compliments as refined as pearls—and quite as valuable—considering who they come from.

He invited me to go to a dance at the Ritz-Carlton—and Aunt John to go along as chaperon. I could see she was torn between two emotions. She wanted to go herself, yet she didn't want me to go. But she finally accepted for both of us. . . . Going to a real four-hundred dance at last! Won't I make Nan's black eyes get big as bullaces when I get back? . . . I'm going to wear white tulle—you never know just what it costs; it's as deceptive as some blonde women's ages.

Orrin is going to practice me up in the new dances—he really seemed to *want* to do it.

March Fourth

It was a dream—the dance. Such beautiful women! Such lovely gowns! Such a gorgeous ballroom! So many partners! I danced everything, and cut each dance into so many pieces the evening was a regular terpsichorean hash. Everybody I met swore they adored the South, and could die listening to the accent. Mr. Lockhardt had caught onto the title invented for me by Orrin—*Miss Dulcie from Dixie*—and presently everybody was calling me that. The men declare they are all coming to my next matinée—I thought matinées were women's things, like chiffon and fudge.

March Seventh

Aunt John, whom I have always thought to be in the same state of health as the Rock of Gibraltar, or the Sphinx, made known to her family today that below her sound exterior she is threatened with a great give-away. These internal crumbles are very mysterious, but aren't they thrilling! Fancy a great monument like Aunt John, or one of the pyramids, going to pieces! Change of scene seems to be the accepted way of averting such human smashes: change and quiet. So the great world is going to be left to get along as best it can: Atlas (*Mrs. Atlas*) is going to lie down on her job—her physician has prescribed it. She must go away somewhere. Uncle John, who has returned fresh as a rejuvenated chanticleer, suggested California. Too many people there. Then Aunt John made known her own sick fancy. She wanted to go to Glynn Manor; she craved Glynn Manor as you and I crave pickles when we are bilious. With only a few servants, and "Dear Dulcie"—now, would you have believed it?—she wished to go to Glynn Manor for

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a few weeks. While Aunt John was at the phone telling Mrs. Vanderwand about her interesting retirement, Uncle John explained to me that the Manor is an old country place he keeps as a sort of summer place. It had been the family home of his first wife, Constance Glynn, and it is up in the foothills of the Hoosac mountains near the little town of Glynholm, where he with Constance's brother 'Xander had first gone into business. It seems he and 'Xander had been chums at Yale—Dad had chosen the University of Virginia for his. . . . Uncle John says it is a beautiful old place: his keen blue eyes were vaguely misty as he told me about it, and I became really enthusiastic over visiting it. Of course it will be very quiet in the winter—it is three miles even from the village. . . . When Aunt John came back from the phone she said she hated to take me away from New York just as I was beginning to get into the gay set; but trained nurses are so unsympathetic! . . . We will leave day after tomorrow. Tinie is going with Aunt John, Mammy with me.

Mr. Lockhardt dropped in later, and he looked surprised, and not at all pleased, when he heard about our new plans. He declared he means

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to make us a visit while we are at the Manor: he realized he hadn't seen as much of "dear Cousin Electra" during the last few years as he would have enjoyed—he smiled as he said this and looked significantly at me—and he intended availing himself of every opportunity of being with her now.

Glynn Manor
Wednesday Night

I'm sure I've stepped right into the pages of a New England story: anyway, this is the house described in a hundred and fifty of them. Quaint—yes, that's the proper name for Glynn Manor: interesting, romantic.

From the station out we drove past several estates with modernized houses, but at the Manor we arrived at eighty years ago. A delicious, old house of gray stone, all gables and peaks and dormer windows. What a place in which to ramble and dream dreams! It loomed large in the night as we drove up, all slashed with yellow oblongs, which were windows throbbing forth light to welcome us. There was a big fire with yule logs in the square hall. There were candles in branching candelabra: deer's heads on the walls and skins on the floor. We went up funny little stairs to bedrooms under the eaves, with charming windows full of little leaded panes. There is old furniture—not so handsome and massive as that at Arden, but interesting. I like all of it. It seems the

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apotheosis of simple and whole-hearted New England, just as Arden is the symbol of the same sort of spirit in the South.

There is plenty of quiet here, and if Aunt John takes it with an equal proportion of rest her internal shock ought to settle nicely. I hear the place is haunted, and I am sure I have the haunted room. I do hope the "hant" is a lovely lady who died for love—that kind are not so apt to throw soap-dishes and candle-sticks at you: they only float around in misty garments with streaks of hanging dank hair—u-g-h! Glad Mammy's going to sleep curled up on that spindle-backed couch—I hope she'll snore!

We had sweetbreads for dinner: I adore them!

Anyway, Orrin's not with Ann-Dawn to-night.



Thursday

Received a box of flowers from Orrin today—gold-cupped daffodils—forced, of course; no simple-minded daffodil would bloom this early. They look lovely in my gray room. Aunt John didn't seem a bit angry that Orrin had sent them, and took a bowl for the dining-room. She eats heartily. I suppose internal shock doesn't upset the digestion. There is an attic here: I spent a divine hour in it today while Aunt John was taking her nap. Constance's people were strong anti-slavery advocates—I found their old books. So that was why Uncle John forgot his own country—well, love excuses many things.

Aunt John talks to me continually of Orrin—a thing she never did before. She tells me all his good points—how she must hate the prospect of Ann for a daughter-in-law! She said today that it was only his play-writing ambitions that led him to associate with stage folks; I suppose that is how Ann worked her rabbit-foot on him—oh, what an unintentionally funny remark, considering how I tried to work my own foot, on Orrin—and failed!

Friday

It is snowing! . . . The gray air is swarming with little pale wings: as if a wind were running through God's great garden of white sweet peas, and millions of the loosened blossoms were being shaken down over us.

Aunt John's frowns smite the window-panes, but I feel as wild as any of those flying flakes. I've never seen a really-and-truly snowstorm before, and I want to get out and dance in it; I'm going to as soon as Aunt John becomes sufficiently appeased with Nature for me to leave her.

Monday

You may talk about your springtime being the season of destiny: how can a world of bilious green compete with a universe cut out of one great pearl and dusted over with powdered diamond? Why, such a stage is set for magic!

By Saturday morning the storm had ceased, and the metamorphosis of an every-day world was completed. When I saw the finished work I stood at my window enchanted. We seemed set in the center of a great white cameo.

"M-a-m-m-y! O-h, Mammy, we've wakened in heaven! Come and see," I gasped.

An old race-shiver ran through her African body, as if she were looking on some stealthy menace.

"I's gwine t' git you yo' coffee *rat* now, honey. . . . Dem snowses is likely t' chill you t' de marrer."

"Chill? That beautiful thing out there! I love it, Mammy—I'm crazy about it!"

"Dat's jes' hit, honey! Dat's de way hit wo'ks on fo'ks: hit goes t' dey brains—lak

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morphine. Hit sooves 'em, an' puts 'em t' sleep, an' dey lie down in hit, an' never wakes up; I've heard tell o' dem snowses, an' what dey does t' people."

"If you get lost in the snow, Mammy honey, of course you freeze to death, and they say the sensation is one of drowsiness——"

"You ain't goin' out in hit, t'day! You won't, baby!" My old Mammy knew me!

"I'm not going to get lost, Mammy."

But she watched me all morning, as if the snow outside were a greedy monster lying in wait for me. Aunt John was fractious. She resented the snowstorm. After lunch, however, she wore herself to sleep. I sent Mammy down to iron me a fresh blouse and took the opportunity to respond to the call of the white Wild outside.

It was three o'clock when I got into the big fur coat Aunt lends me for very cold occasions, and slipped out the front door. . . . I went down between white mounds that are bowers of lilac-bloom in springtime. I skimmed along a frozen river that in ordinary times is only a commonplace road. I felt myself made over into one living flash of joy.

I came to a vast wood that was like a marble

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temple, with pillars of mottled stone, and a floor that the mauve shadows made into mosaic. For a second I felt exalted in that lovely fane, then a strange rush of loneliness swept over me. A new sort of fear, too. As if, all at once, Life had found me out and was warning me:

“You are a woman now, Dulcie Culpepper, and it is woman’s fate to love, and to want love in return! You may laugh and banter. You may challenge sentiment: swear defiance to the scarlet flag of passion, but on Love’s battlefield, Dulcie Culpepper, woman is but a poorly equipped rebel. King Solomon knew it: Kipling knows it: even your own Dad may have trembled with the knowledge when he saw you fare forth on your first adventuring.”

When I came out into the open country on the other side its empty white reaches ached about me. They seemed to symbolize my future, and it seemed to me I should almost welcome the attacking banner of love rather than such a stretch of dead-white monotony.

As if in answer to my impulse away off on the edge of the open I saw a shape like a moving shadow. It came nearer and nearer, and though its only banner was the flashing red of a smile, and the waving of a gay hand was its

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only signal of attack, I knew it was the enemy bearing down upon me—and I was glad! My soul sang a sort of war-song as I ran to meet the invader.

“O-R-R-I-N!” I cried out, and he cried back, “D-U-L-C-I-E!”

Then we rushed at one another, and met arms—or rather, hands. After a minute I snatched mine away, and put my red mittens against my cheeks: sometimes I am as intuitive as a cat with her first kittens,

“This is a dandy surprise,” he said. “I didn’t dream you’d come to meet me.”

“To meet you? W-h-y, how’d I dream you were coming?”

“You didn’t think any brand of elements, nor any amount of any brand, could keep me away?”

“I never thought of your coming at all.”

“Mother told you, of course!”

“She did not. Did she know it? She never so much as intimated it to me.”

“O-h! Maybe she feared you wouldn’t be pleased: You—aren’t—angry—with me, Miss Dulcie?”

“Why,” I was tingling with delight, “what right have I to have any feeling at all about

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your coming to see your mother? . . . I'd be very—inhuman, surely."

"Surely! And you would hate to be inhuman; it's so—so——" he floundered.

"Unladylike," I finished. "I know Aunt John will be overjoyed: this snow has gotten on her nerves."

"And you?"

"I've been maudlin with joy since the first flurry began—it's my first big storm."

"I couldn't get any conveyance at Glynholm—so I'm walking, but I must have a sleigh tomorrow, and take you for your first sleigh-ride."

"Oh—will you! With bells—like Santa Claus!"

"Oh, plenty of bells. . . . Almost tea-time? I'm ravenous. . . . My! What a little Teddy you look in Mother's great coat."

He took my arm. We turned together, back towards the white wood full of violet shadows—but the silences no longer ached! We stopped, and stood for a moment, without any words, in that white hollow—and Orrin's hand closed tightly over my fur-clad arm. The stillness of that snow-temple all at once was full of strange tones—as if every flake was singing,

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and the whole made a united chant more marvelous than the reputed music of the spheres. Oh, talk about your spring woods—the color and texture of young goslings—when love finds you in the *snow* then you will know what deathless destiny really is!

Aunt John received us radiantly—her restiveness quite gone. I know now it was occasioned by her fear that Orrin would not get here—strange, she does not see how inevitable Dawn is now!

We had tea, and the best sandwiches and cakes that cook knows how to make. The yule logs crisped scarlet, and sent out ruddy cheer. We dressed for dinner, and played three-handed bridge afterwards. I sang at the old square piano—just tinpanny enough to suit Aunt Lucy's sentimental old songs.

Yesterday morning we had our sleigh-ride—*with bells!* It's the most fascinating thing in the world. You go flashing through sheer joy—no time to think about anything.

When Aunt John went up for her nap after early dinner, we went out. We walked into Glynholm and went for afternoon service to the little Episcopal church. What a fortunate woman is Ann Lamar—Dawn Fairfield, I

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should say. I wonder if she will ever feel a great cry of love to all the world go up from her heart just because she is kneeling beside Orrin Castleton in some little church far away from the busy world? Will she ever thrill from her brain to her toe-tips because the same pew-back supports both their heads? Her hand tingle because his holds the other side of her prayer-book? I tried yesterday afternoon to imagine myself sitting there, the beloved of Orrin——! The fancy, and then the awakening, was too keen! I think I gave a little indrawn breath, for Orrin turned quickly and looked an inquiry. I pointed to a big pin that held against the fur of my muff one of the gardenias he had brought out to me. In the privacy of that high-backed pew Orrin leaned over as if to pick up something and brushed my finger with his lips. . . . I wish he didn't feel called upon to pay me such mock gallantries! . . . His lips burned my hand like flame! . . . During the next prayer I laid my mouth upon the spot that his hand touched. . . . "Dear God, now that I am a woman help me to be a brave one! Be with me in this my first taste of her bitter drink! Help me to pay squarely the privilege tax for being one!" This was all I could pray at first. Then

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I thought of Dad—and the \$1,500—and as we got up from prayer I was able to meet Orrin's sidelong smile with one, I hope, as light.

I am going to beg Ann-Dawn at least to be a good woman for Orrin's sake.

Aunt John slipped up to bed right after supper. We got to talking of the theater, and Orrin told me about his latest play. He's going to bring it out and let me read it. . . . He went back this morning. The snow is melting. My *gardenias*—which are only the old "*Cape Jasmine*" of the South—isn't that funny?—are still fresh. Aunt John is in a heavenly humor.

Saturday

A quiet week, devoted for the most part to Aunt John. I've gotten flowers every single day from Mr. Lockhardt, and candy three times a week. . . . Aunt John says these great "philanderers" never see their offerings themselves—they simply keep their orders set up at florists' and confectioners'. I looked up "philanderers": the definition gave me the cue to my aunt's estimate of Mr. Lockhardt's little attentions to me. . . . How gay it makes me feel! How naughty! Like a full-fledged White-Lighter! A middle-aged millionaire "well-known clubman and man-about-town" philandering with little country *me*! By all the rules he ought to be inclosing a few diamond tiaras to dazzle my innocent young eyes.

Orrin sent me a volume of Emily Dickinson's poems—poor girl! They say she wrote before her time, and living, missed her laurel wreath. Oh, but she had the unspeakable joy of writing those lovely things. . . . I dreamed last night of interpreting one of the poems in a classical dance at a Broadway café with Orrin for my dancing partner. What funny things our astrals sometimes do!

Monday

Orrin came out again Saturday afternoon. I knew he was coming and I assure you I didn't meet him half way this time. In fact I was two miles on the other side of the Manor when he came, and I stayed away till after tea-time, and quite put Aunt John out. I remained downstairs for an hour after dinner, and then I sneaked up to my room—there are things a mother wishes to say in private to her son when she hasn't seen him for a week. I told Aunt John so, when after she had sent Tinie up for me, and Tinie had found me in my kimono in bed with my Emily Dickinson. Aunt John came up, mad as hops, to ask what I meant by treating Orrin so. It was too late to get up and dress all over again, and I am sure I felt drowsy at the time, though afterwards I couldn't go to sleep and began to hate Emily for having spoken my own thoughts years and years before I was born—and so much better than I could have spoken them. I saw the lights from Orrin's window in exaggerated oblongs pour over the naked lilac bushes below

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long after I put out my own: maybe he had brought his own pocket Emily Dickinson along, and he, too, was reading my prenatal thoughts.

We went to forenoon service—Aunt John, Orrin and I—at the little church in Glynholm. Aunt John made quite a stir: everybody peeped at her. Uncle John almost supports it: he was married the first time in that little church. There is a vein of sentiment way down deep in the soul of this money-choked member of the Culpepper family: why can't I strike it? True, I haven't had a fair chance, and the time is getting terribly short.

As Aunt John started up for her beauty sleep after lunch, Orrin hurriedly said to me:

“You don't need a nap, won't you please stay down and talk to me? Mayn't I go with you for your walk? Mother says you walk every day. I brought the play along: it's finished: I felt such an incentive to work this past week.”

“O—h! then of course we'll walk—and you may read it to me.”


We didn't read the play, after all. We just walked and talked, and looked at things: Orrin was like a young kid out for a holiday. I felt in rather a prankish mood, myself: as if I'd play a joke on Fate and steal a good time with

Miss Dulciē from Dixie

Orrin in spite of Dawn-Ann. Aunt John had tea ready for us when we got back. I'm getting crazy about this idea of afternoon tea. I wonder how Dad would take to it? I'd as soon offer a war-horse Syllabub.

After dinner Aunt John appeared torn between two emotions. She seemed afraid to start upstairs lest I rise and go, also; and she was afraid to stay down lest I arise and go without her. I settled matters by asking Orrin to read us the play. After he had finished the last act and we had gotten deep into a discussion of it, the old Tabby slipped off and left us alone. Does she really think I can oust Dawn, now?

As to the play, it is delightful—I really know a clever thing when I see it. He is going to rewrite some parts of it, and then I'm going to ask Mr. Bindmann to read it—I believe he will do it for me. I am not going to tell Orrin: I shall just borrow the play as if to read it again, myself.



'Sunday Night
March Thirty-first

Do poets and novelists reproduce their own ecstasy in its white-hotness, or is what we read of love only a remembrance? My burning joy is but ten minutes old. Can I, in dismal white and black, reproduce its pulsing glow? And there's the introduction to be gotten through. . . . I'll try to write rationally the whole "endurin' thing"—as Mammy says: God grant it may be enduring!

Orrin came as usual on Saturday. That evening we read the rewritten play, alone, together. . . . The quiet old house seemed steeped through with the essence of life long dead: we two were quick with the life that is now, and the hope of things yet to be. Orrin was stretched on the hearth-rug; I sat in a low chair just above him. He looked eager and fine, the red fire playing over his face, as propped against two cushions he read, his eyes occasionally burning up at me. . . . Once my mind wandered to think how proud Dawn-Ann will—or should—be, when sometime Orrin as

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author shall be called before the curtain of one of the Broadway theaters. But is it in Ann to feel pride in anybody but herself? I had a minute's bitterness as I tried to fit her into the heroine Orrin had created—of course he will stipulate that she shall be given the part. I had to throttle the little imp of Satan that for an instant tempted me not to show the play to Mr. Bindmann, and try to get him interested in it.

Then I discovered it was late. . . . I got up.

"Not going?" he caught at my skirt. "Oh, say—*don't!*"

"It's after twelve—would you have thought it?"

"That doesn't matter—down here. Mother knows it's all right, and we've not talked of anything but my play yet. I've been a selfish egotist. Tell me about Emily Dickinson—how you liked her?"

"I think," I said—his eyes had almost the power of the hypnotist's crystal globes but I braced myself against their influence—"I think poets are all fools, giving so much time and thought, and good red feeling—that might go into something real—to mooning out a lot of stuff about love and their souls." And last

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night Emily's little verses had run shiveringly all over me! He got up slowly, looking at me in surprise.

"I didn't know you—felt—that—way. It's a real thing—this love that you laugh over. . . . It rouses many impulses, and sets going many great actions. It's not to be made light of—if you once feel it."

"If it makes me feel moony, and bilious, and miserable as it makes poets feel, Lord preserve me from it!" At that minute I ached all through with my love for him. "Do you know Emily's verses inspired me to dream I was dancing a set of them. I even recall some of the steps: this way——"

I chanted a stanza, dancing as I recited. . . . Orrin came after me:

"You are a—little—devil!" he whispered rather huskily over my hair as I stopped, breathless. "I wonder if you have ever realized how—very—magnetic you are!"

"Yes—to philanderers; and—engaged men."

"What do you mean?" he asked rather sharply.

"It seems those are the kind who find me—magnetic: or at least who pay me compliments."

Miss Dulcie from Dixie

"Who is the—philanderer?"

"Mr. Albert Lockhardt—Aunt John says."

"And who is the—engaged man?"

I looked knowingly into his face, and then laughed gayly, as if my canniness were the source of great pleasure to me.

"Oh, we act much like the ostrich, we do,"

I mocked from the open door to which I had worked backwards: "we run away miserable and restless, and we return at peace with all the world, and then think nobody has sense enough to suspect the reason of our change." I quizzically shook my finger at him.

"You think——" he came running at me, but I fled down the hall. He came after calling softly—"Dulcie—Wait!—Wait! Do you think——" But I ran up the stairs as fast as I could. Just as I reached my door I looked back—laughed at him again, then slammed myself on the inside, forgetting everybody else in the house was asleep.

Sunday morning before I was out of bed—Mammy had brought up my breakfast—I was called to the telephone. *Who* do you think spoke to me from its other end? Mr. Lockhardt! He was in Glynholm. He said he had come to fulfill that promise—or threat. Of

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course "Cousin Electra" would be delighted to see him. Might he come out at once, or would we be attending church? Well, he would join us at the morning service, and depend on Cousin Electra to invite him home with us for lunch, and tea, and dinner. He intended going back to New York that night: the train passed through Glynholm at 11.10—awfully early, but they refused to alter it for him for this one occasion—beastly unaccommodating! This was mere pleasantry, of course. He was dying to see me—New York had seemed the most forsaken hole for the past three weeks: when in pity's name *were* Cousin Electra's nerves going to get taut again?

Aunt John's face had wrath planted in all its furrows when I left the phone. She thought that was really "too much. The idea of Albert forcing his reprehensible maneuvers into her very rest retreat!"

"What maneuvers, Aunt?" I innocently asked.

"His attempts to turn the head of a little, inexperienced girl—and my husband's niece. It's disgraceful. I am thankful Orrin has never been like so many society men of New York."

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"When he—pursues a woman, he means business—even if it's an actress," I sided with her. She turned purply-red.

Orrin didn't look overjoyed when he heard of his third cousin's presence in Glynholm. He made a feint of throwing off his annoyance, though, when Aunt John expressed her fear that my peace of mind might be disturbed by the philanderer's attentions: I laughed, too: nothing was further from my intention.

Mr. Lockhardt sat next to me in church. Someway the beauty of the service didn't touch me as it had on last Sunday afternoon. The pew-rail didn't grow thrillingly sentient when the millionaire's baldish forehead leaned upon it close to mine. . . . The visitor laid a crisp ten dollar bill on the plate—how lovely it must be to have money!

'Course Aunt John had to invite Mr. Lockhardt home with us: I don't think he even noticed that she was boiling like Hot Springs, Arkansas, inside her rocky bosom. . . . He seemed to have a perfectly splendid time. He and Orrin and I went for a walk in the afternoon.

The moon rose full as we were at dinner. We could see it shining through the old fan-shaped

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transom. After dinner Mr. Lockhardt caught me by the hand—we were behind:

“Come out on the porch?” he begged. “I haven’t had you to myself a single minute—and I came just to see you. Let’s slip away for a little while: Cousin Electra will understand.”

I nodded: we opened the door and went out. It was lovely—the moonlight over the old place. The foothills were like shapes of mother-of-pearl: the bare lilacs etched designs on the silver walk. . . . Mr. Lockhardt made love to me. He said he realized the inequality in our ages, but he had not before (during his widowhood, I reckon) met any girl who so appealed to him. . . . I parried and parleyed, as my subconsciousness told me to do; the little country girl has no intention of becoming any sort of a plaything for the tired business man. All the time his watch hands were moving up. Presently the old rattle-trap of an auto from town came honking up—you know the shabbier they are, the louder they honk. So it was “King’s ex.” between us.

There was very little regret on the faces of either Aunt John or Orrin as they told our guest good-by. I ran down the steps and stood

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waving my handkerchief as long as I could see the car. When I turned Aunt John had gone in, and Orrin stood on the step above me, his under-lip caught between his teeth. As I ran up he prisoned me by both hands:

“What are you going to do with that old cradle-robber, Dulcie?” he hoarsely demanded, his breath on my hair, his hands hurting my wrists. “My God! to think of money giving such men the power and the privilege of winning such girls as you! Dulcie—Dulcie—can he give you everything? I love you—I love you, Dulcie! You must have seen. I haven’t money: I am no rival for Albert Lockhardt, but, Dulcie, girl, *I love you!*”

I broke away from him, every pulse in my body beating like that tattoo the Indians beat in the ecstasy of their war-dance. Mine were beating for war, too; I knew it even while the mad joy raced through me. Me of the South—Dulcie from Dixie: daughter of the last fire-eating rebel of the Confederacy, and he, son of the North: child of a Yankee mother—and besides, Ann-Dawn! she was my best weapon of defense.

“What about Ann—I mean, Dawn? You shouldn’t chuck Dawn—now!”

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“That’s all over, Dulcie. Couldn’t you see? Haven’t you seen? Don’t you know?”

But I had pulled away my hands and was speeding down the dark hall, as I had sped once before. It was such a safe thing to do. It meant nothing, and it gave me time to think—think—think!

He came after me. “Wait—wait! please wait! You little Will-o’-the-Wisp thing! Let me finish: put me out of this racking suspense. D-u-l-c-i-e—dear!”

But I was in my room. I closed the door all but the tiniest crack: through this I put out the fingers of my right hand, and through this I smiled. Orrin jumped at the fingers and pressed his lips to them. He tried to pull me out, but I whispered, “I’ll holler! Mammy sleeps like a little weasel—good-night.”

“But just tell me——”

“Good-night.” I jerked in my hand and closed the door.

Two half proposals in one night! Dulcie Culpepper, you are almost a bona fide woman; I believe it takes one full offer of marriage to make a woman grown.

Monday

I'm working hard addressing invitations to a breakfast—no, Delphine, not just “batty-cakes” and coffee like you have at home; but eight or ten courses, with toasts and orchids and an orchestra: the annual breakfast of the “New York Chapter of the Daughters of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence”—an awfully awe-inspiring society of which Aunt John is a member, and of whose Committee on Invitations she is chairman. They are asking a few hundred of their friends to this, as Mammy calls it, “reshershys” affair. They sent down the list and Aunt John added a few names. She set me to addressing envelopes, and when I looked over the list I was surprised that Aunt John had not added the name of Mrs. Tolley. I asked if she had overlooked it, and she set her lips together:

“I have not. After the way she has repaid my efforts to help her get into decent society I am going to drop her.”

“Why—how has she repaid you, Aunt John?
... What has Mrs. Tolley done to you?”

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"You ought to know," she snapped. "Encouraged this outrageous attempt of Albert's to—er—flirt with you."

"O—h," I laughed outright: it was funny: I hadn't dreamed how much my dear Aunt John thought of her stepniece. "Please don't let that come between you and Mrs. Tolley; maybe she thinks she's doing us a big favor. It's something to have a great millionaire running after you, even if only at a flirtatious gait."

"I believe you think he's in earnest," she turned on me. "I tell you, you must be careful, Dulcie. You don't know these New York society men. You'd better not waste your time on that kind: you'd better be encouraging some moral, sincere young man who would really marry you."

"Like—Orrin?" I asked, innocently.

She thought of getting angry, but checked herself. Then she began telling me how she had found out that Orrin was really in love with me; how she wanted her son to be happy, and was willing to put aside all—er—personal prejudices, and welcome as a daughter any girl he had decided to marry.

Oh, but I boiled at that! Prejudice, indeed! And how about the girl? Suppose she sported

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a few pin-feathers of prejudice, herself? Was Orrin privileged to go around just promiscuously falling in and out of love, and expecting the women he honored with his chameleon-like fancy to have only one set of feelings?—a sense of overwhelmed honor for his just-for-an-hour devotion? Does he think our Southern sentiments have all oozed out like the juice of a squeezed orange? I felt a flash of red-pepper temper burn all through me, but I took the list of names—without Mrs. Tolley's—and strutted out.

In my mail this afternoon came a formal proposal from Mr. Lockhardt—what do you think of that, Hortense? Your little country Southern great-great-great-grandmother was proposed to by an honest-to-goodness Wall-Street millionaire!

I'm going to ask for time to consider his offer. Gee! what couldn't I do for Arden and the "History of the Civil War," with all those millions! No, I know you do not love him, Dulcie Culpepper. You draw away and a darkness as of death descends upon you when you think of taking him for mate. All the blood of you—all the soul of you—rises and cries out for—something else. "Dulcie, don't you know

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that is all over! Dulcie, don't you know? I love you!" Oh, but the blinding sweetness that rushes like a sunrise-colored, honey-flavored torrent through me, and I don't care how mixed my metaphors get!

Orrin has not written. I suppose he will wait until Saturday for his final answer. . . . Three days to think. . . .

Saturday Morning

My head is in a whirl. Can I write intelligently?

I do not know which of two sensations is uppermost in my being—an intoxicated excitement, or a fierce disappointment and disgust. Which shall I tell first? Which is biggest? The whole world would unite in declaring only one is of real importance: yet the other looms dark in my soul shadowing my upper joy.

It began with those breakfast invitations that Aunt John sent out—or rather the one she did not send to Mrs. Lockhardt. Of course Mrs. Tolley expected one—she's been lovely to Aunt John. Besides she paid Aunt John for her chance to get into society, and Aunt John took the pay—but I'm ahead of my story. It seems that while waiting for Mrs. Tolley No. 1 to get her divorce, the present Mrs. Tolley went to work in the office of Chapman and Chapman, the firm of lawyers who are looking after this end of Uncle Stephan's funny old will. Well, as private stenographer for Mr. Chapman, Sr., she became familiar with the provisions of that

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will, and being in love with Mr. Tolley—who was a second cousin of Uncle John's wife, remember—she took more than an ordinary interest in the matter. When she left the office of Chapman and Chapman and became Mr. Tolley's wife, she remembered it distinctly. She even came to know me by sight: Mr. Tolley's house isn't far up the avenue from our corner: her maid was friendly with Tinie, and she heard all about the affairs in her husband's cousin's home. Through the two maids she heard about Aunt John's quarrel with me—on account of Orrin. She knew Aunt John was trying to run me home. She knew when Dad came to take me back. Then Mrs. Tolley had an inspiration. She called on Aunt John (I have written about that call) and told her a professional secret she had learned in the office of Chapman and Chapman. For the promise of social recognition she sold her knowledge where it would do her most good. She informed Aunt John that the girl, *Dulcie Culpepper, who believed she would receive \$1,500 if she stayed in the home of her Uncle John Culpepper for a period of six months, would, in reality, by the terms of her deceased Uncle Stephan's will, become heiress to the sum of*

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\$500,000! There, it's out! Wasn't Uncle Stephan a sly old fox? Miss Dulcie from Dixie heiress to just half a million if she stays in her Uncle John's home until May 10. Will she stay? Yes, if she has to camp on his doorstep. . . . Of course Aunt Electra could not judge the actions of an heiress to half a million by the rules set for mere heiresses to fifteen hundred—you know how that is yourself. Dear middle-aged mother who reads this chronicle, if a girl soon to be worth five hundred thousand dollars in her own right were to try to attract the attention of your penniless young son, would you banish her from further attacks upon him? No! Aunt John emerged from that mysterious interview with a changed heart. The scales had fallen from her eyes, and she had seen her husband's niece as she really was—a dear little duckie thing—prone to gambol about and stick her bare feet into young men's faces—"such a naïve little jest!" She adored a joke herself, though her feet have always been too large to perpetrate that particular one. . . . Oh, I see it all now! How Orrin was sent for in haste: "Come at once: something good." The chance of a lifetime for a young man without expectations. *And he came!* He left

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Dawn-Ann quite in the lurch. Dawn-Ann in one side of the scales and Dulcie Culpepper—weighed down with a prospective half million in the other—Dawn must have gone up like a girl on the light end of a see-saw. Mrs. Tolley says Aunt John told Orrin: that she sent for him, and he at once began his suit to the future heiress, and all was going well till Fate juggled. Mrs. Tolley's millionaire brother-in-law appeared on the scene and was seized with one of those unaccountable fancies that crop up like sporadic cases of the measles. . . . Here was a serious menace to Orrin's hopes. Millionaires are rather attractive to poor girls, and apt to upset the plans of ambitious mammas with prospectless sons. So this mamma got nerves, and was obliged to rush away for rest: and she couldn't do without the prankish little girl she had so suddenly come to adore! The prospective heiress was whisked away from the gay set she was just getting into; away to a quiet country place, and the ambitious son brought out to pursue his wooing under conditions so favorable—oh, it was a well-laid scheme. It almost worked. If it hadn't been for that Daughters breakfast! Of course Aunt John had gotten angry with Mrs. Tolley

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for introducing her brother-in-law and seeming to encourage his fancy for me: she looked on it as a breach of contract, and retaliated by not sending the social climber an invitation to the swell function. T-h-e-n—the indignant Mrs. Tolley got even by turning State's evidence: she wrote me the whole thing. I got her letter today. She told me everything—even how Orrin was trying to get on the inside track and win me before I knew about the will. She assures me that Mr. Lockhardt knows nothing about the prospective fortune: he has fallen in love with me for myself.

Oh, Dad—Dad! Did you dream such as this was included in the business of being a woman? Uncle Stephan, did you once imagine that instead of bringing about peace and good will that curious old document of yours would involve your beneficiary in such a snare?

But, oh, \$500,000! I need not marry a millionaire—I need not marry anybody. . . . Dad—Dad! we can repair Arden, tear up the mortgage, publish the War History, and live happy ever afterwards. It is really no matter that my faith in the finest and sweetest things in life have been torn beyond hope of ever being made whole again.

New York
April First

I was calmer after writing it all down yesterday. I did not go to lunch. I went for a walk—to clear my brain. When I got back to the Manor it was two o'clock, and my mind was made up. I went up to my room and had Mammy pack our things. Aunt John was still taking her nap. Then I telephoned into Glynholm for an automobile—one that would take our luggage as well as ourselves. We dressed, and then I went down into the living-room where Aunt John was writing her speech for the D. S. D. I. breakfast, which is only a week off.

"I am leaving for New York," I said in the doorway. She looked up with a start. "We are going on the four o'clock train—Mammy and I. You seem quite well now, and—Orrin will be here to stay over Sunday with you. . . . I suppose you can get a trained nurse out by Monday if you wish one."

She broke out on me. I had to clinch my hands to keep from answering back, but I only

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smiled when she accused me of wanting to get back to see Mr. Lockhardt. She said I was positively courting danger.

"Not much danger," I still smiled coolly. "A man hardly means ill by the woman he has asked to be his wife—and for no mercenary reasons." She sat looking at me as if fascinated. "But that isn't why I am going back. Uncle Stephan meant more than the earning of a little money when he made that will. I'm going back to try and make Uncle John care a little about me before I go home. . . . Good-by."

The automobile was honking. Two boys came in to get our luggage. Aunt John sat almost petrified. She begged me to wait until Monday: said she would go back with me then. I was firm in my plans, and my small trunk passed as I told her so. I waved Aunt John an airy, half-a-million-heiress good-by, and ran down the walk, Mammy hurrying after me. We honked and cluttered into Glynholm. I shut my eyes tight as we passed the little gray church: something that I had worshiped once inside its walls had been torn from my heart, and the place smarted raw and sore.

Our train left half an hour before Orrin's

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got in: I laughed to fancy his chagrin when he should reach the Manor and find the bird escaped the snare. What an uncomfortable week-end they would pass—he and Aunt John!

Uncle John was almost childishly delighted when I surprised him sitting solitary over his afternoon paper in the lonesome living-room. We had dinner together—I told funny stories and encouraged him to tell some. I sat up next to him and pealed his peach for him. Then I asked him to take me to a show: we went to a popular musical comedy—plenty of dancing and pretty girls: I sat with my hand in his most of the time, and we had supper afterwards at a bright, gay place. I went in and kissed him good-night as I do Dad—oh, I made every minute count! He said he didn't know I was such a dear little girl before, and he wished he had a daughter like me: it was the sorrow of his life that he had no son to perpetuate his name, and inherit his wealth—he had determined never to leave it to—a step-child—oh, Aunt John! I see even more clearly.

Then I ventured to ask him if he wouldn't sometime pay back my visit, and he said he'd—think—of it: yes, he'd think of it, and—run on now and let him go to sleep.

Monday Night

Aunt John came back this morning. I had gotten calm enough to welcome her as if nothing had happened.

I didn't see Orrin till this evening. He was extremely quiet during dinner. As we left the dining-room he waited for me. "What are you going to do this evening?" he asked in a hurry. "Won't you give me a chance to talk to you?"

I had planned nothing: I have not yet let any of my friends know that I am back, but I answered:

"I have something important to do."

"Are you going to take Lockhardt, Dulcie? I know I can't compete with him in money—but—won't you give me a chance?"

"There is not the slightest bit of chance for you—now," I replied with decision. "Money regulates love in this big burg—I've learned that." I hoped he might understand that I someway knew why he was proposing to me, but I believe the shot missed its aim.

"I—misunderstood," he said, a little hoarse-

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ly. "I had hoped—that day down at the Manor—this is final!"

"Absolutely," and I ran up the stairs.

I wonder if Ann will take him back! Well, they are pretty well matched. . . . Verily, verily, the running after money causeth many a man (and woman) to go bias. Yea, even myself was one time sorely tempted.—Selah!

April Sixteenth

Mr. Lockhardt insists that we remain friends. Orrin and Aunt John think I am going to marry him. Aunt John has told me seventy-seven distinct scandals about him, each spicier than the last, but I only laugh and say I like a man with a past.

April Twentieth

Mr. Bindmann speaks rather encouragingly about Orrin's play. Orrin tried to thank me last night. I wouldn't wait long to be thanked. Then he broke out:

"You seem to take an actual pleasure in hurting me. What have I done but fall in love with you?"

"In love!" I repeated with irony.

"You know I love you, Dulcie. . . . My God! you can't pretend to disbelieve that. You can't pretend to think I'm playing any kind of a foolish game, because—well, for any reason. You're woman grown now, and you must see that this is the real passion of my life."

"I saw you madly infatuated with—Dawn," I reminded him.

"But this is no—infatuation. I love you! It is different." He has the dramatic instinct, has Orrin. He would have convinced any woman, except one who knew, as I did.

"You ought to go on the stage, yourself. Get Mr. Bindmann to cast you for a part in your own play—you'd make a hit."

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I got inside the door. We were all coming home from the opera. Uncle and Aunt John were ahead, and Orrin had been holding me back in the *porte-cochère*.

I am going up to a college fancy-dress dance. I think I'll go as a little Southern rag-tag boy—I'm so tired of being a woman. They ought to pay us well in homes and children—and to think I'm to be cheated out of that latter part of my natural wage. Yes, Delphine, you are still a floating, formless thing of blue. You will never read this chronicle of your little great-great-great-grandmother that was meant to be. I shall never marry. None of our widows ever marry again. You will not see Jane Lamar Davis buried in the midst of husbands in the old graveyard in Mississippi. When our women rise to the last trump there will be no confusion in pairing for the great ascension.

Castle Heights
April Twenty-fifth

To be effective, transfiguration should be complete. It is not a matter of legs and arms: it must commence with the inside. If we do transmigrate after this life, God grant we do not take all our recollections with us. It'd be like wearing scratchy-backed satin over half-healed scars. I was about the prankiest little Dixie boy that ever got loose among a lot of lovely ladies, but I hadn't been able to put my spiritual parts in pants. Deep down inside me was my woman-soul.

I don't believe Professor Bubbles is going to live long. He's running all to head, like a cauliflower. I like him—just as I like cauliflower: he's rich and delicate and rarely flavored. We had a long, lingering walk Sunday—as if we felt it would be our last together. I'm glad he's never asked me to marry him because I don't believe I could refuse him any more than I could refuse to take in a stray kitten or a homeless dog. He says he's always felt that he ought not to marry—he realizes he

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would give his amœba and toads more attention than he would his wife and children.

Only two weeks more: Uncle John looks really thoughtful over it.

Wednesday

Dawn is back: I saw it in the papers today. Aunt John has invited—urged me—to prolong my visit after my appointed time is up. Will I? I wonder if a Special would carry me home any quicker?

May Tenth
The Day of Days
Midnight

The first record made by Miss Culpepper, the heiress! Her writing looks exactly like the writing of Dulcie Culpepper, the little pauper from Way-down-South-in-Dixie; if her pictures taken yesterday and today were pasted here, side by side, you'd probably see no difference: her stature is the same—but her status!—oh, Lord, it's swollen like a balloon after inflation!

The afternoon papers all had long stories about "the unique will" and me.

"Beautiful Young Southern Girl Visiting in New York Falls Heir to Fortune."

"Expects \$1,500 and Gets \$500,000 by Will of Eccentric Uncle."

"Miss Dulcie Culpepper, the Noted Entertainer," etc., etc., etc.

Also various photographs of the new heiress. I've had telephone calls, and Aunt John's tea-

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table had to be done over three times. I kept my eyes on Orrin during the reading of the will—he is certainly a consummate actor! When the amount of the legacy was named I saw his eyes dilate and remain bulging almost to the point of blankness. . . . Then I had a surprise myself. I ought to have expected it, but I hadn't. . . . Uncle Stephan had divided his fortune evenly: there was another half million, and it was bequeathed to that representative of the Culpepper family who should receive and “give gracious hospitality” to the visiting “member of the other branch for the stipulated six months. . . .” So Uncle John gets the other half for putting up with me and my overtures! No counterfeit surprise on the faces of Aunt John or Orrin when this climactic clause was read. Uncle John choked. He turned from white to red and then back again—like an electric sign. He was fluctuating like that when I looked at him. He looked back at me, and his white mustache shook like a little flag. Then I ran at him and threw myself all over him, as I do Dad when he gets those awful taxes arranged—somehow.

“I’m so glad, Uncle John!” I cried. “I’ve been an awful nuisance, and I’m so glad you’re

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going to be—er—rewarded for letting me stay.” . . . It nearly broke up the meetin’.

The first thing I knew after it was all over was Orrin holding out his hand and saying:

“I never—was—so glad—in my life.” Then everything got mixed up. Mammy was hugging me, and crying. The lawyers were trying to shake my hands, and Aunt John was attempting to make her voice express real surprise. Then I asked to be allowed to go and get a letter off to Dad: a telegram would frighten him. Also to pack my trunk: I wished to get away just as soon as possible.

So Dulcie Culpepper of Arden plantation, Mississippi, is a bonafide half-a-million heiress tonight! . . . Have I earned my money? I’ve honestly done my best. I call on the ghost of my fairy godfather to witness that I have!

I know Uncle John will never come to Arden: Dad will never second my invitation—oh, what on earth is so stubborn as two old men—except two young lovers.

*En Route from the Culpepper
Hague Convention*

We left New York—Mammy and I—at three-thirty this afternoon. It was a departure attended with great *éclat*. There was more than one millionaire to see me off: also a great theatrical manager, a celebrated *vers libre* poet, a lot of society folks—but no young lawyer with playwright ambitions! My compartment blooms with flowers. If I eat all the candy sent me I shall never get my “tummy” in normal condition again. I have been pestered to death with newspaper reporters, but now I have settled down to the quiet and solitude of a three-day railway journey.

I am not given to tearing up last year’s birds’-nests to find out positively what went into the making of them, but I can’t help picking the last six months to pieces and looking curiously over its threads and straws. As I gaze back to where the great city melts into my “has-been,” it really looks to me like the disappearing face of a great, good friend that I, somehow, made out of an indifferent, almost

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hard, stranger, and I give it up with real regret, hoping some day to renew my friendship with it.

And now as my first six months of being a woman comes to an end I suppose it would be good business to take stock: I ought to know exactly what have been my expenditures, and what my gains—so here goes:

DULCIE CULPEPPER: In account with SIX MONTHS OF LIFE.

(Being the first of her really-and-truly grown-up womanhood.)

Gained

A place in the memory of a few hundred New Yorkers as a clever teller of Southern stories and a singer of Southern songs.

The knowledge that all millionaire society men are not made up completely of guile and fondness for White Light.

An odd assortment of friends, comprising,

Lost

One little-girl faith in the openness and honesty of all the world.

Ten thousand little worries about mortgages, leaky roofs, greeny-black trousers, frayed collars, grocery bills and boll-weevils.

All hope of the natural heritage of every woman

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Gained

among others, one *vers libre* poetess, one noted theatrical manager, one ascetic professor of biology, one ex-vampire, a few hundred lovely schoolgirls, one worn but almost-as-good-as-new millionaire and one white-faced monkey in the Bronx Park Zoo.

A comprehensive and rather too varied lot of knowledge of human nature.

A marked degree of style in dress, arrangement of hair—acquired, perhaps, from New York modistes, hair-dressers, etc., etc.

Lost

—a home, a mate and children of her own.

One six months' attempt to bring the estranged New York and Mississippi branches of the House of Culpepper together in amicable accord.

One ecstatic, wonderful "first love"—killed in the hour of its birth.

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Gained

Several inches of social "polish"—caught, without much effort, from the vast quantity flying around about my late environments.

One strong and healthy sense of self-reliance.

Six months' hardy growth of one intense adoration of home, Dad and all the past that went into the making of the present.

\$500,000—or one-half a million dollars.

One *tiny* place in my Uncle John's affections.

One great sense of material care-freeness.

One full-grown woman's heart.

Lost

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Even a man with one glass eye can see that the gain far exceeds the loss.

Here comes Mammy trying to get my pen out of my hand.

“F'r Gawd's sake, honey,” she says, “put up dat little book ef it's gwine t' make you look as frien'less ez a po' white trash 'ooman signin' a mortgage on 'er farm to pay de burial expences uv' her late 'usband.”

“First call to dinner in the dining car in the rear of the train.”

“Get me out a fresh blouse, Mammy: a pretty one.”

Those debits and credits make my head ache.

Arden
Mississippi

I've been too busy to write days, and too tired to write nights.

Being a half-a-million heiress just about doubles the business of being a nary-a-cent one. Getting used to a new fortune is like getting acquainted with one's in-laws when one is freshly married.

We've put new roofs on Arden Hall, and built new tenant houses on the plantation: that last was my idea, and I put it over Dad a little on that point. I can't see that because men and women are black as burnt ginger-bread they ought to live in houses to match. My new little glass-windowed, papered cottages are the envy of the other negroes for miles around, and the objects of some sarcastic remarks from the neighboring white farmers, I hear. As a result of the new houses quite a mongrel crop of newly born "Dulcies" have sprung up on the plantation.

I have had a great family "dining." Nan and Bettie and Cousin Cassius with the chil-

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dren: I could hardly bear to look at little Valentine, he is such a tiny replica of Ann, yet he went to my heart, just the same. Cousin Cass' poor haunted eyes! Why will a man grieve so for a worthless woman? And a woman for an unworthy man? There is a bitter link between Cousin Cassius and me, if he only knew it. There's very little of her mother in little Dolores—thank God! I mean to educate her when she's big enough; she loves me already.

All the family connections came, eager to hear about everything. Nobody asked if I had not felt awed among the rich and socially great of that great city; trust a Southern aristocrat for an ingrained sense of equality no matter where you put him, or her. Everybody said "our Dulcie" had only gotten her dues, and they were mighty glad she had upheld the family name in that antipodal section vaguely known as "up North."

July Fifteenth

The crops are laid by until fall. There is little to do now. . . . One gets used to half a million as quickly as a young husband does to his bride. My fortune honeymoon is over—I am tired. Arden, healthy and self-sustaining, is not nearly as appealing as Arden, helpless and needy. Why shouldn't we go somewhere where there wouldn't be so much time to think, and so much room to think in? It rather hit Dad in the face when I proposed it last night: he can't get the foot-loose feeling all at once. He's been so used to thinking his now and hereafter depended on his crops—poor dear!

"Every half-a-millionaire travels," I urged. "I want to go—go—go—go!" He fixed his beautiful old eyes on me, then shook his head slowly, as if half talking to himself:

"My little girl is gone: she paid for her money with her youth."

I ran into his arms, and broke into sobs on his breast. I shouldn't have done so, but all the sluiced and dammed floods of hurt remembrance that have beat about in me for so many

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weeks, burst. I overflowed on Dad's bosom—it didn't really matter: he has oodles of fine white shirts now. He kissed my head over and over, pressing it against his flat man-bosom.

"It was too big a price to pay!" he choked. "No money can compensate for a woman's happiness. Yes, we will go, honey: we will travel, and forget whatever hurt they gave you up there."

Yes, I want to forget that a man, young, talented—capable of making his own career—would stoop to a scheme so cowardly as to try to marry a girl just because he has come into the knowledge that she is going to inherit a fortune—not to speak of deserting another woman whom he has followed about in a way compromising to her unless he intended making her his wife. . . . Forget an afternoon in a little gray church as far removed from the sordid world as real happiness is removed from ugly falseness. To forget Orrin Castleton—that is now the thing I most desire in this world! One gets used to being the possessor of half a million, but will one ever get used to being a bankrupt at heart?

Colorado Springs

August Twenty-seventh

This is not a book of travel, so I have not attempted descriptions of the show places of Nature that we have visited; Mr. Stoddard and others have done all that. This is only a little heart-interest story—as the newspapers say. It deals only with human doings and undoings.

I have had a thin dripping of letters from New York since I have been traveling. A reproachful one from Aunt John intimating that Orrin's heart is broken! She can't quite give me and my money up. She also announces that Mr. Lockhardt is paying intentional attentions to a woman quite appropriate to his age and station—a widow of great beauty and *aplomb*. One almost affectionate letter from Uncle John hopes that my stay in his home had not proven too much of a hardship on me. Miss Bubbles informs me that she has become associate editor of an intensely modern little magazine of poetry. Good! Now she can get all her own poems published and not be at the mercy of editors whose tastes refuse to progress beyond

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the standards set by the Brownings, Tennyson, Swinburne, and a few other rhymsters like those. A gentle volume from Professor Bubbles gives me a good deal of interesting data concerning his toads and protoplasms, and informs me, incidentally, that he is having temperature every day—poor dear! his mind always above his heart and body! Many snappy blue and buff pages have come from the Castle Heights girls—and one sheet from Orrin, in which he says:

DEAR DULCIE:

Mr. Bindmann finally decided against the play, but he's going to use a comedy I've written *around you*. Can you pardon the liberty?

Thank you so much. It is through you this has come to me.

As ever, yours,
ORRIN.

A play about—no, around me! So if I ever see the play I'll see myself as he saw me—an unusual privilege. "Comedy!" So he found me an amusing figure. If he could write one around the inner me I'm afraid he'd make only a rather poor little tragedy. I suppose if his play makes good he'll marry Dawn: she'll be

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more eager than ever to get him if with him she can get under Mr. Bindmann's management—suppose they give her the part of me to play! I couldn't stand that—I believe I'd have to protest.

Home Again
September Sixteenth

I couldn't keep Dad away a minute longer. He felt he must be at Arden for the harvest season. We've made a bumper crop—now that we don't really need it.

We've found, however, a new species of evil is threatening our county: working with almost the same sinister obscurity as the little bug that last year made Arden look like a flea-bitten gray horse. The Whitecaps—a secret order banded together for heaven-knows-what purpose—has been at work in our neighborhood. It is composed, for the most part, of a low element of whites, and their operations are confined to cowardly attacks upon negroes who hold jobs they seem to feel should belong to white men. Every little while some negro finds tacked to his cabin door, or dropped near his working place, an order—lugubriously decorated with skull and cross-bones—to leave the country immediately. Their personnel is kept a profound secret: Dad says it is a sort of Ku Klux gone wrong.

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The menace is growing, and getting nearer us. Sam—Mammy's favorite grandson—has had a notice tacked on the door of his house. Sam works in Jenkin's Saw-mill when there is nothing to do in the fields, and last week one of the white men who works near him remarked that Sam was living in "too damned fine a house for a nigger," and the white men in the neighborhood ought not to stand for it. I suppose that's why they have served their notice on him to leave the country. It has distressed Mammy terribly, and Dad is white-hot over it. He says it's an outrage without excuse, except petty meanness. . . . To think my pretty cabins should have become a source of hardship to their occupants!

September Twenty-first

We had a wildly exciting time last night. Things happened—big things.

Susan, Sam's wife, was sick: in fact had entertained the black stork at seven that evening—(another little Dulcie). Mammy was over there: I had sent her word to stay all night.

At a quarter after twelve I woke to a sudden noise, and sat straight up in bed. It came again—the report of a shot-gun. Then another and another—down the road, fairly near by, they sounded. I jumped out of bed and ran out into the hall. There I met Dad, in his night-clothes:

“Whitecaps, Dulcie!” he said, hoarsely.

“It can't be they're at Sam's!” I whispered in horror.

“That's where they are: they're after that nigger.”

“But Susan's just got a new baby, and Mammy's there.”

Dad ran back into his room. “What are you going to do, Dad?” He was drawing his trousers on over his night-shirt.

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"Go after them!"

"Oh, Dad, not you—alone!"

"Run—wake Scales." I have forgotten to say we had installed a manager to look after Arden while we were away, and he and his wife occupy the ell rooms on the lower floor. I ran down in my nightie, and banged on his door. (Mrs. Scales is on a visit to her people, up-state.)

"S-h!" came from within. "I heard it: I'm nearly dressed."

Dad was dressed when I got back upstairs, and had his six-shooter.

"You've got your little revolver, Dulcie: bolt your door and keep your windows shut." The shots kept sounding.

"I'm going to phone the Pinton boys, and the police in town," I said.

"Yes—yes!—before I get clear away."

I ran to the phone—we have one upstairs. Dad rushed down to the stable. The Pintons live on the place next ours. They were already up, and said they would meet Dad and Mr. Scales on the way. While I was doing the other phoning I heard Dad's White King and my Brown Bet, with Mr. Scales riding her, go loping down the lane. I prayed with

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my subconsciousness while I phoned the police in town. And all that time that terrible pop—pop—pop—kept up. When I'd phoned everybody I could think of I ran back into my room.

After a while the shots began to dribble away. I grew faint as the noises grew fainter. I rushed into my clothes and got my little revolver: I'm my daddy's own daughter when it comes to firearms. I ran downstairs, and out into the night. It was starry, but there was no moon. I kept close to the edge of the road as I ran on. I saw nobody, but when I got within sight of Sam's house there were chinks of light showing through the blinds. I knocked on the door, and called Mammy. She came tottering out, gray as ashes, and fell into my arms. Nobody was hurt, but poor Susan was scared nearly to death.

Dad had gone after the fleeing Whitecaps—all the men had. I was cold with fear concerning my blessed old General, but while we talked an automobile rushed up; it was the police from town: they, too, set off in pursuit.

But to go back to what had previously happened as Mammy told it. The Whitecaps had come up quietly, but not before Sam had suspected the meaning of the soft thud-thuds of

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the approaching horses. Susan was in the back room, fortunately. Sam whispered at the front room window:

“My Gawd! Mammy, come here.”

Mammy says it reminded her of Reconstruction days. The whole road in front of the house was full of figures, only they were in dark clothes, not white as the Ku Klux Klan used to be. Sam locked the doors and put out all the lights. Mammy told Susan and they all prayed. The Whitecaps began firing at the house. A shot or two crashed through the front windows, and hit my pretty papered walls that had angered the “po’ white trash.” Dad doesn’t think they meant to hurt anybody, only to frighten Sam into leaving the neighborhood. The negroes were nearly crazy with terror. Sam had just determined to go out on the porch: risk himself in an attempt to tell them about the new baby, and Mammy had gotten him a sheet to wave as a truce flag, when they heard a sort of buzz, and a turning of horses. The whole band went loping away, and Sam saw Dad’s White King go dashing after them: Sam then got his own horse and joined in the pursuit.

I can’t tell the suspense we were in for the

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next hour. Then we heard the automobile returning, then the horses. Dad rode up: he scolded when he saw me—but he smiled, too. They had gotten three of the Whitecappers: had simply run them down. These had used up their ammunition and fallen behind, riding old plugs as they were. They knew they would be shot if they did not surrender so they gave up. The officers were taking them to town in the automobile. They are illiterate men of the lowest class of whites.

We stayed all night at Sam's. I was helping with Susan, and Dad and Mr. Scales and the Pinton boys and Sam sat out on the porch and talked it over. I think they had a tearing good time!

December Twenty-fifth
Twelve P. M.

Christmas is over. We spent it at home: home is the only place you find Christmas: it is as elusive as the Blue Bird of happiness—the wanderer always misses it.

I got up at six-thirty to make Dad's eggnog: no self-respecting Southerner of the old-school would think of taking his 25th of December breakfast without that preliminary eggnog—light and golden, and like the nectar of the gods in taste.

We had two Christmas trees: one for our white neighbors set up in the library: the other for our blacks in the big back hall. They were lovely; shiny and heavy with every glistening thing ever made to jewel a tree, and there were candies, fruits, dolls, horns, fireworks, etc., for the children: new dresses, boots, ties, handkerchiefs, books, and that kind of things for the grown-ups. Cousin Cassius was Santa Claus: he really got quite gay in his crimson gown and pillow stomach. Is there anything on God's variegated earth quite as spineless and tooth-

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less and stringy-haired and straw-colored as the wife of the typical back-woods Southern farmer? A dozen of them came to my Christmas tree—packing and dragging their innumerable children, their hook-wormy husbands lending what aid they could. They were too shy at first even to untie the scarlet ribbons that hid their gifts, but when they did get into them, oh, their wondering delight! I really must hold a hair-dressing “meet” and present each one of them with a box of pink face-powder.

We ate Christmas dinner alone, Mammy standing behind our chairs. We were not gay, after all the excitement of the trees. It was my first sad home Christmas—as well as my first wealthy one, which goes to prove a very old saw.

I had gotten lovely flowers, and after dinner we took them to the cemetery. We sat an hour beside that other Dulcie. . . . I wonder if she felt Dad there—her lover of the past, her faithful lover still? It came over me like a flood of cold water, the aloneness I shall feel on some far-off future Christmas afternoon as I lie loveless in my narrow bed. Dad must have surprised something on my face, for he suddenly caught my hands:

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"Baby, what is it? Can't you tell your old Daddy? I've seen it ever since you got back. What's wrong with you, honey? What did they do to you up there?"

I lay in his arms sobbing out my tricked and violated love—but not in words. Never in words shall he or anyone know what life, through Orrin, taught me during my first six months of womanhood in New York.

"It's just that—that—I'm really grown up now, and—and—know what real, grown-up people feel!" Then I sprang up. I stopped that crying by laughter, just as you put your hand over a faucet and choke back the water. I lifted Dad from his seat:

"Aren't we foolish? Here on our first really Christmassy Christmas! I want to go into town—to the picture-show. Come. Dad, let's have supper at the Cotton-Blossom: it'll be so—reckless and—bohemian!"

We did, and now it's midnight.

Orrin sent me a box of wonderful lilies-of-the-valley. . . . I wonder he didn't choose orchids—those splendid parasites.

New Orleans
January Twentieth

We are in lotus land; only the lotus here excites souls to gayety, instead of lulling them into lazy languor. It is as golden as eternal afternoon; only it's always merry, hospitable afternoon in this quaint old town. Roses and violets on the street corners: pleasant people with smiles on their faces—withered old black Mammies with nut pralines to sell: old-world courtyards; curio-shops where you can buy wonderful mementoes of a passing people—I'm steeped in romance up to my ears!

February Something-or-Other
(*I haven't a calendar by me*)

A thrill is stirring this delicious old city all through its social arteries—the approach of Mardi Gras. To understand this you must know what it is to be a girl in New Orleans at carnival season: what it means to be or not to be “called out” at Comus or Proteus ball: social success or failure, that’s all.

As about this time of the season you receive, or don’t receive, mysterious hints of these coming honors, a great flutter and twitter sets up in society’s bird’s-nest. . . . I have already gotten two of the coveted forerunners, so I’m pluming my little pin-feathers mightily. . . .

Dad and I have made no end of friends since we’ve been here: someway people found us out. Dad adores the clubs—the Pickwick—the Boston. I revel in the old restaurants.

I am what you might call “the fashion”: I could go somewhere every hour of the day, if I wished. And I’ve met some perfectly delightful men. I’ve been made love to—oh, yes, of course: by languorous Creole eyes, soft and

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dark as August midnights in which storms
seem to brood. . . . But it's awful to be young,
and petrified inside your satin bodice!

I suppose ball gowns will engross my attention
for the next week.

Ash Wednesday

Tears for torn tulle!

Penitence for painted cheeks!

Sanctity for soiled satin slippers!

All fashionable New Orleans is praying in gray this morning. We barely had time between festival and fast to get our chiffons off, and our sackcloth on. Along with the other carnival belles I've been to church—though I feel like a torn whirligig. It was restful, though, to kneel for half an hour in the dim Cathedral. . . . If in these still hours Orrin's face did not always boom like an insistent bell!

His play made a hit. It is having a wonderful run. The critics pronounce "me" a delightful character—umph! He made me a regular little unrepentant rebel; peppery, and with lots of spunk—thank you, Mr. Orrin! . . . So he has gotten the desire of his life! I wonder if he mayn't be already married to Dawn? I think Bohemian people do marry sometimes, and keep it dark for professional reasons.

Professor Bubbles is dead! I felt it was coming—and I was dancing when it came. . . .

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And Mr. Lockhardt really married the appropriate widow—how fast and furious life goes on! Nobody remembers things but me. . . .
A century plant dies when once it has bloomed
—I must belong to that Aloe family.

Spring again at Arden

A year and a half a woman; Heavens! at this rate how old I will be when I am really old! Maybe, though, I've learned it all now. Maybe it's like when you go to school: there are so many grades and then there're no more lessons. Then you get peaceful and pale like Dad, and just go on the rest of your life quietly and gracefully existing, instead of burningly living. But it's going to be so long till I get really old and placid.

Arden in spring! Seas of transparent green that you are sure you could swim through, if you only had the faith to forget your earth feet, and would try.

What I like best, these days, is mounted on Brown Bet to go dashing through the newly greening forests, along the old roads or paths that meander to heaven-knows-where: the more vagrant the better; it's more like life to go rushing whither and whence, than to be sure of the end of your journey.

Mammy says I'm looking peaked. She poked sassafras-tea at me to thin my blood till I went

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off in flesh. Then she flew to the other extreme: she decided my blood needed thickening, so now she walks behind me day and night with a glass of cream in her hand.

The trial of Maybin Macklemore, Wills Bruce, and Somebody-or-other Johns for Whitecapping comes up next week. Dad is intensely interested: he thinks if these agitators are given a moderate punishment it will put an end to the lawless organization. They are all three worthless sorts of individuals, and Dad thinks the punishment may really make men out of them. Only one of them is married, and we have been taking care of the wife and children ever since Wills was captured, and shall continue to if the husband is convicted. There are smothered threats being whispered about that the organization of the skull and cross-bones will never let their captured members come to trial: how they propose to prevent it is unknown. Dad laughs at the whole thing. What rather alarms me is the likewise untraceable rumor that the organization has it in for Dad. I don't know what they can—or dare—do, but it keeps me uneasy. He occasionally gets even a little provoked at me, but I tag along with him all the time.

May Twentieth

Isn't it hard not to play your ace first? Isn't it the ear-mark of a raw amateur to flaunt your climax too soon? This is going to be a well-played hand. This is going to be a correctly constructed entry. You shall not see the strength of my cards, nor guess the climax of my story until the proper time.

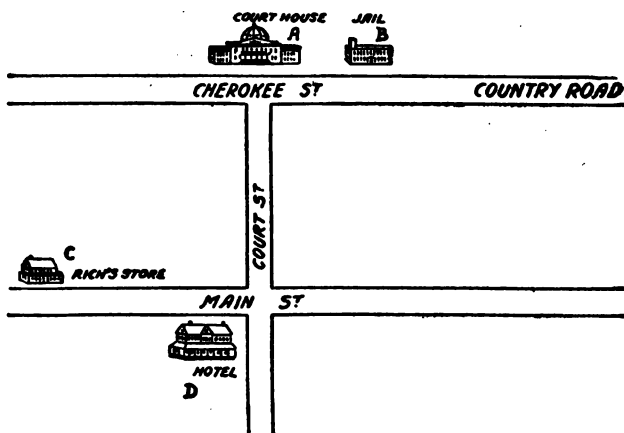
We will begin with the trial of Wills Bruce, and others, indicted for Whitecapping. It came up today. Dad was an important witness. I went with him to town, of course: Dad and Mr. Scales, Mrs. Scales and myself. Dad and Mr. Scales reported at once at the courthouse for the trial, and Mrs. Scales and I—useless women that we are—hung around town.

About 9.40 as we were walking up Main Street we caught a piece of news that had started somewhere, and came rushing down that little thoroughfare like a small tornado.

"The Whitecaps are coming! They are coming, armed and mounted—a small army, to take their three members out of jail, and away from trial."

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I stopped short when it hit me. I was dazed for a second. Then I fell in with the flying drift of men, and rushed to a point where I could see the courthouse. Now to make this story clear I shall have to draw a diagram of a little portion of the town of Brookhaven—though Heaven knows I never aspired to be an artist. The courthouse stands exactly facing the end of Court Street—(see A. in diagram). The jail is beside it—(see B.).



I ran to Stain's Hotel—(see D.)—from whose side porch I could see straight up Court Street, the courthouse and, incidentally, the jail. At the moment I got there (along with some other useless women who had heard the

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news) I caught another piece of breathless information. The men of the town—the merchants, the clerks, the doctors, the lawyers, the bankers, and all the law-loving men of Brookhaven—were collecting in front of Rich's Store (see C) and were being hastily equipped from here, there, and everywhere with arms; and presently, when the company of cavalry Whitecaps should appear in Cherokee Street, which is the road in front of the courthouse, the opposing army of civilians—led by old Colonel Justice Culpepper—proposed to charge down Main Street, up Court, and thwart the Whitecaps in their purpose.

When I got to Stain's Hotel I saw them forming in front of Rich's store: eager, virile, stern with purpose. Dad was mustering them: giving them their orders. I could see his wonderful figure, straighter, more elastic, than I had seen it in years—here, there, everywhere, putting men in places, and inspecting guns. My heart leaped proudly, although it got a stab. I wanted to cheer him on, even while I wanted to cry out and beg him not to take part in so dangerous an undertaking—I wonder if it is that way with all women in war?

“It's Colonel Culpepper's own plan: he's go-

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ing to lead the attack—or defense,” somebody said near me.

“*Lead!* Of course he would always lead! the old war horse! The old fire-eater! *Red-Pepper* once more.”

At that instant I saw him put himself at the head of the long line. Winding in from Cherokee road I saw a great band of mounted men coming—two by two: men just as grim, as keen (it appeared) as our own! The Whitecaps! Riding up, as they thought, to surprise the Sheriff and Jailer, and forceably take their apprehended members.

Here they came! Of course they could not see down Court, and up Main, to where the civilians were marshaled. Their speed accelerated as they neared their objective point—I am not well up in military terms. My eyes ran back to the long dark line reaching from Rich’s store almost to the corner of Court Street. I saw Dad at their head wave his gun. They stepped forward. I glanced back up Court, down Cherokee, to where the approaching Whitecaps were whipping up close to the jail. . . . I held my breath. . . . My eyes sped back to the approaching foot-rank—with my old white warrior in their lead—I gasped; he was

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not now leading alone! On the off side of him I could vaguely glimpse an assistant general—old, too, I could see that, as they marched: smaller than Dad: slighter, less military, but, an elderly leader, determined like my own Dad, and keeping resolutely beside him in the dangerous vanguard. . . . Another figure walked alone just behind them: a young soldier without a marching mate, erect, firm, broad-shouldered—even at that distance a notably noticeable figure. . . . He kept close to Dad—carrying one of the rifles from Rich's hardware stock.

Down Main they came; up Cherokee rode the Whitecaps. In one second the two bands would sight each other—I shivered! My heart sent up one silent prayer. . . . When the town column should turn that corner directly in front of me, and the Whitecaps should catch sight of them—oh, the awful suspense of it! We women on Stain's hotel gallery clung to each other, knowing what would happen.

The Whitecaps would doubtless open fire first. They were mounted, and they were the offensive side. . . . They would open fire upon the approaching line—and where would the first shots fall? On the leader of that foot-column,

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of course! On my Dad, eagerly bringing on his men. . . . The leaders of the Whitecaps had halted their line: they had heard something—scented something. At “attention” they waited, in front of the jail facing Court Street. . . . The town column was at the corner of Court, and about to turn. In one second Dad would round the corner and be in their sight—but just at that instant—just as Dad and his old marching mate were about to make that clean-cut turn, I saw the young fellow just behind suddenly step forward; swiftly and surprisingly place himself directly in front of Dad! So they made the turn. My heart leaped, selfishly glad. It gave my beloved one a protection. I could not see any further. The column swung up Court at double quick. We all held our breath . . . but not a shot sounded. We saw a slight movement like a wind through a grain field run through the close ranks of the halted Whitecaps. . . . Then an astonishing thing happened. We rubbed our eyes—we women on the porch of Stain’s hotel. There was a kind of concerted movement among the Whitecaps—then as quick as you could say Jack Robinson the whole mass took motion, and staying not upon the order of their going, guns

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down, reins lashing horses, they took to their heels—figuratively—and went at once. Off they ran pell-mell, like a flock of frightened sheep—galloping out Cherokee road. Our advancing column gave one loud cheer. A wild jeering cheer—a whoop of victory, of amusement. I think I distinguished Dad's old rebel yell in the mêlée of sound.

Our men ran on, still keeping ranks, to frighten their fleeing attackers better, and when they reached the courthouse broke ranks to laugh and cheer some more. I rushed down Stain's Hotel steps and up Court Street. I flew through the laughing, clapping, excited crowd of men. First one and then another called to me—as I went past:

“Did you see 'em, Miss Dulcie?”

“They ran like turkeys.”

“The old colonel is some fighter yet, believe me!”

But I only waved my hand and ran on to find Dad. I saw him in the courthouse yard, under the trees. His hat was off: the wind blew his hair about like skeins of rich white floss. His eyes were turned on the man at his side—that same frailer, paler old man who had stepped out to the defense of our county, our

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law and order—our people: Dad's marching mate! Dad was looking at him. Dad's hand held his hand. The two seemed spiritually clinging together. . . . The old man beside Dad was—*Uncle John!*

I stopped and stared. . . . Another figure stepped from behind them: it was the young man in the gray clothes who had put himself in *front* of the leader of the Brookhaven Recruits, as they had turned the corner of Court. . . . The gray figure stepped forward, and the misty light fell over—Orrin's face! It seemed to glimmer pleadingly toward me. He appeared afraid to advance further—afraid to meet a foe no bigger than a minute—me! Men are funny things.

But I really had no time for Orrin just then. My mind was too full of Uncle John and Dad standing there with their hands locked—Oh, Uncle Stephan, *did* you see it? Were you hovering somewhere there in the blurry grayness, smiling over your success? Your million dollars had done their work—Uncle John and Dad were reunited! I hardly wondered how it had happened—the joy of it was enough. . . . I went rushing at them. Uncle John held out his arms; they were trembling. I ran into them

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and he hugged me to him and kissed me. Then he mumbled:

“My little girl! I’ve been hungry to see you . . . *our* little Dulcie!”

Then Orrin came up. I gave him my hand—I tried to be simply cordial—they were our guests! Everybody said things that came to me as through the roar of a locomotive. . . . Uncle John and Orrin had arrived on the train that passed through just as the excitement of the coming Whitecaps was stirring the town. They had heard the news at once—had seen the local men forming for the defense—had heard that old Colonel Culpepper was going to lead the opposition. Then they had thrown their hand baggage to a hotel porter, each shouldered one of the guns supplied by Rich’s store, and hurried to the head of the column just as it began to march. Uncle John had put himself beside Dad—there had been only the merest recognition between them then—it had been no time for a family party: *I had seen what Orrin had done!*

We—the four of us—turned and walked back to Stain’s hotel—Uncle John and Dad ahead—Orrin and I behind. . . . They offered no explanation of their visit, and of course we asked

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for none: we wouldn't under any circumstances: I hope we have enough of a sense of hospitality in Mississippi never to do that.

The trial was to continue and Dad was compelled to go back to the courthouse to serve as a witness. Uncle John said he wished to hear the trial and would go, too, but he'd like to bathe his face, etc., etc., first. Orrin didn't seem to care about the case, or his face, or anything but just staying there with me.

I watched the two old brothers finally go off side by side, excited, interested as two youngsters—their faces constantly turning towards one another. . . . Orrin and I stood on the hotel gallery and watched them disappear. Then he wheeled to me:

"Where can we go? I wish to talk to you. . . . You must think me a brassy individual to swoop down on you this way—but—" His eyes were begging for some help.

"I suppose you have some business—perhaps in New Orleans: maybe your play is going to be there: maybe"—a sickening thought seized me—"maybe—er—Dawn—is going to be there." (I have neglected to say that Miss Fairfield was *not* given a part in Orrin's play.)

I believe Orrin's eyes twinkled.

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"I came South solely and wholly to visit—Arden Plantation," he said, "if its little chate-laine is going to be polite enough to invite me."

"O—h! O-f c-o-u-r-s-e! . . . I don't know when this stupid trial will be over—or when Dad can leave town." It was really a curious, baffling situation. "I meant to stay in today—for him."

"By all means! Don't let me interfere with your plans. . . . This is really a charming old inn—quaint, suggesting stories of old romance—shall we go inside?"

We went into the funny, quiet old parlor. It was quite deserted. Orrin said it looked like a description out of a Southern novel—and that he meant to reproduce it sometime in a play.

We stood for a few minutes at one of the windows, looking out at the town. The mist had deepened into a quavering gray rain. It was one of those raw days that sometimes come in the spring. The leaves on the big trees that bordered the sidewalks shivered, they were so thinly green. A negro boy came in and kindled a snappy pine-knot fire in the big black fire-place—it was really cold. People passed outside under their slick wet umbrellas. . . . The

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mud in the old street got black and oozy. . . . The fire threw scarlet and gold lights across the sleek blackness of the horsehair furniture. . . . We sat down on one of the sofas, and were silent for half a minute. I saw by Orrin's face that he meant to come straight to the reason of this surprising visit. He said:

"You are looking a great deal better than I expected to find you."

"W-h-y," I answered, "I'm perfectly well. I don't see why you expected to see me looking—ill—or—any different. I've had a perfectly lovely winter."

"Of course: I knew you would: you couldn't help having all sorts of delightful attentions shown you, wherever you were."

"My own people understand me," I put in, a little hatefully.

"That's true," he said, thoughtfully. "And you never felt quite sure of—any of us. That was natural, born and reared as you were. You thought of—all of us as your natural enemies, and when—when——" he swallowed, clearly embarrassed, "you discovered that—some of us—were selfishly inclined—that is——"

"Yes," I assented. He seemed to understand that I had known all the time about his

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“selfishness,” as he was lenient enough to himself to call it.

“But you ought to be able—you are so big and broad, Dulcie: you ought to be able to understand a mother’s love, and a mother’s ambition for her son; it is an overpowering thing.”

“I might have done that,” I answered: it was useless to pretend that I did not understand that he was referring to Aunt John’s attempt to capture me and my fortune for him. “But a man!——” I suddenly spoke out my bitterness: he was really not my guest as yet: “a man should be above a similar ‘selfishness’ and ambition. A man can make his own way—his own fortune. Isn’t it inexcusable that a man should try and win a girl as soon as he has found out that she is going to come into money?”

There was a little thrill of silence. The windy rain blew a gust of chilly, swishy low sound into it—if it had been sweeter it might have sounded like a kiss.

“And you really believe, Dulcie”—Orrin spoke very slowly and deliberately—“you really—believe—I knew you were going to inherit half a million dollars when I—I—came

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down to the Manor that time—when we were at church together? When I tried to tell you after Lockhardt had gone that night how madly, inevitably I had come to love you?”

“You aren’t going to say that you didn’t know? When Aunt John knew—I know she knew: Mrs. Tolley Lockhardt had written me: I got her letter the week after you—you—you know! . . . I knew Aunt John knew, and I knew why she had so suddenly changed her opinion of me: why she had sent for you to come back from your visit to Ann—er—Dawn; and why you had come back at once and started in to try and win me before I knew—before you thought I knew—about my fortune.”

“Dulcie—Dulcie: wait—wait!” Orrin put out both his hands, clutching mine so I could not get them loose—the negro boy had closed the parlor door after he had made the fire. “Will you believe me if I swear on my honor as a gentleman—by all I hold sacred in this world and the next, that *I did not know*? Mother did not tell me: I had found out long before that that it was you I loved really and sincerely, as a man loves only once in his life—and that any other interest I may have had at one time in—anyone else, was only an interest born, I

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think, of my interest in plays and the theater. . . . When you showed me so convincingly that I might not pay you any attention—after you and Mother had had your break, you know——”

I nodded my head: my cheeks were beginning to burn: that pine-knot fire was really getting too warm.

“I went to travel a while with ‘The Near-Great’ Company—I had already discovered that my feelings had changed, and I hoped to get back the interest I had lost in—this is a beastly thing to tell, but it’s true.”

“In Dawn?” I murmured, with, I fear, a little note of amused irony: her *nom-de-théâtre* always touches my funny-bone.

He bowed. “But I found on that trip that it was dead—absolutely dead. She did not seem the same to me. I seemed to be just getting acquainted with her, and I knew I would have made a miserable mistake if—things had gone further with us. I left with everything over between us, determined to work as man never worked before, to win you. Mother’s telegram that she was very unhappy and upset only hurried me a little in my return. She never intimated to me then, nor afterwards, that your fortune was to be larger than the previ-

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ously stated amount. My mother stands ready to substantiate this."

I sat perfectly still. My blood raced through me. Suddenly he pulled a sheet of soiled, crumpled paper from his pocket, and began to open it. He softly laughed in spite of the ten-sity of the situation.

"This is what put me onto the cause of your frosty behavior to me—God bless the old soul! You're not to scold her, now." He handed the paper to me. It was a letter written in the un-mistakable scrawl of the negro with a little education. I knew it was Sam's writing the minute I looked at it, though it was dictated, of course, by Mammy. It read:

*Arden Plantation
May Twelve.*

DERE MISTER ORIN

I take my Pen in hand to rite to tell you that My baby has not ben the Same sense we got Back frum new Yok an i know the resen why, wich i have made up My mind to tell You because i cant beleve You done it. my Miss Dulcie beleves You knowed she was going to git that haff a milliner of dallers from her unc Steven instid uv thet other money they said She was going to git. and that was wy You asked her to marry You instid of the actres lady You was

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in love with. I dont beleve that was wy You done
it caze My baby is sweet nuff fur enny man to want
to marry.

Yo ma knowed bout that haff a milliner of dollers
befo the will was red caze Miz toly Lockhart knowed
hit an tole yo ma fo-hand. then she rote Miss Dulcie
an tole her she had tole yo Ma, an miss Dulcie Thinks
yo ma tole you and then you axed her to Marry with
you. mu baby girl aint lak she was. she aint happy
no mo.

yo Tru friend and well wisher

CHARLOTTE LAMAR
miss Dulcies mammy.

post scrip t.

if you didnt know honest to god you ort to come
tell her so. mammy.

I sat with my eyes down. What could I say?
How refute Mammy's astute old testimony?
He began—to cover my embarrassment, I am
sure:

“Now, Dulcie, to prove the truth of what
I've told you, I want to add a few material
facts. My play is a success. If my mental
oil-well don't run out with my first output I'm
a success as a playwright. But I have a better
refutation against the idea that I wish to marry
you because of your fortune. I do not need
any woman's money, Dulcie. When my step-

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father heard of all this—oh, I raised a pretty storm, I tell you—and learned what my feelings are towards you, what do you think he did, Dulcie? He's a true Culpepper, deep down! He drew up papers making me heir to that other half million your Uncle Stephan left. He said he had grown to love you like a daughter, and he talked to my mother as I have never known him to talk before; then he invited himself to come along and 'fix up this little mistake.' Now, Dulcie——" Orrin had my hands again. A cloud had drifted up that made the world outside like deep twilight: the pine-knot had died down—it was very dim in the old hotel parlor: "Now, Dulcie," Orrin's face was over mine—his truthful eyes compelling me, "you see I do not need your little old \$500,000. I'm a half a millionaire, myself: but—I do need you! Can't you believe me when I swear to you that I've loved—loved—loved you, ever since——"

"I stuck my feet in your face?" I mumbled, but so incoherently he did not catch anything but a little gurgle of tone.

"Oh, too long to count up. It's you—with or without a cent, for me. . . . I wanted you when you were only a little Southern girl battling

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bravely to put a roof on your old home, a new coat on your old father's back—did you think I didn't know all about that? . . . It's you I want, now that we're each able to buy ten roofs and twenty coats if we wish them. . . . Dulcie—Dulcie—you must know: you must feel! It can't be that love like mine cannot make its own truth and honor felt! You—must—know!"

I knew! I raised my face. . . . I think Uncle Stephan and Mumsey, and all the dead and gone of my race were swaying and singing for sheer joy all about us in that still little old parlor—dim and deserted, I am sure, for my benefit. . . . I lifted my face, and Orrin kissed me. . . . What's the use to write another word, when you've gotten to your climax? I've reached mine—all you little great-great-great grand-daughters who read this. . . . Orrin kissed me! We love but once, we Lamar women. . . . Orrin kissed me—and then—*I kissed Orrin!*

•
'BRAD

